MANASSEH
EPHRAIM
NAPHTALI
DAN
BENJAMIN
ASHER
MY BOOK
NAME
ADDRESS
When I was ____ years old

Books are the keys to wisdom's treasure;
Books are the gates to lands of pleasure;
Books are the paths that upward lead;
Books are good friends.
Come, let us read!

—EMILE POULSON

Stories of the Prophets

COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION

of the

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

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"The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz."—Isaiah I, 1.

STORIES OF THE PROPHETS

(Before the Exile)

BY

ISAAC LANDMAN

*

Department of Synagogue and School Extension
of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations
Cincinnati, Ohio

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To

My Parents

Who first introduced me to the Prophets,
this book is dedicated with
love and devotion.

FOREWORD.

The company of inspired men, commonly known as the prophets of Israel, were the unique product of the Jewish religious genius. They were pre-eminently preachers of righteousness. Fearless and undaunted, they told the house of Israel their sins and the house of Jacob their transgressions. They contemplated the facts of life from the highest point of view. For them religion and morality were blended, ethics and politics were one. Theirs was peculiarly a social message; the demand for justice underlies all their thinking and speaking. They had a veritable passion for righteousness; through all the ages their words have been torches lighting the way of men struggling upward towards the truth.

Though living over twenty-six hundred years ago, these men are very modern. As a great thinker has well said, "The spirit of the prophets of Israel is in the modern soul." The foremost workers for the welfare of their fellowmen to-day posit social justice as the first article of their program. The world to-day, as never before, is filled with cries for social righteousness as the indispensable foundation for the structure of society. What is this but harking back to the eternal message of the ancient prophets? "Let justice flow as water" passionately and unreservedly demanded Amos of old; for him and his brother prophets this was the sine qua non for society's welfare; the same may be said of the thousands and tens

of thousands to-day of every creed and every nation who are toiling for the social salvation of their fellowmen the world over. Ages meet; the words of the ancient preachers of righteousness are still the inspiration for the seekers after justice everywhere.

The story of the life work of these giants of the spirit has often been told, but it can be told none too often, particularly if the telling is well done, as is the case in the present volume. Each one of these men delivered the same message in his own individual and inimitable way. Yet their work was continuous and forms a consecutive tale. In the speeches and experiences of each one of them the eternal truths they present appears in differing light. The author of the present volume approaches his subject, one might say, from the dramatic standpoint, for, with fine insight, he has culled from the lives of the prophets those striking and intense experiences which illustrate most powerfully the indomitable spirit of these men who followed right in scorn of consequence, for were they not the messengers of the God of right whose demand upon men is, as told by one of them in imperishable words, to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God?

The author has succeeded well in his characterization of the various prophets. His pages glow with the vital spark of each prophet's flaming figure. He has named his book fittingly "Stories of the Prophets," and interesting stories has he told. He has brought to his task not only a sympathetic appreciation of his subject, but an imaginative faculty that has enabled him to supply links in the narrative

suggested if not actually given in the incidents preserved in the recorded annals.

From the words of the prophets themselves he has, therefore, occasionally built up situations which if not strictly indicated in the original text may, at any rate, be imagined. Not as predictors of events in the far future, for this the prophets were not, despite frequent interpretations of their words along this line, but as bold speakers of the truth, as fiery preachers of the right, as intrepid champions of the poor and oppressed, as fearless denouncers of corruption and wrong in high places does our author present the leading figures in his book. As such, their words are as significant for us to-day as they were for the men of their generation, and their impassioned accents sound as forcefully now as they did then. This is brought out clearly and strikingly in the sketches of this volume, which without doubt will succeed in giving a vivid picture to the reader of these towering spirtual heroes who belong to the ages, speakers of the everlasting nays and yeas of the Everlasting God.

David Philipson.

Cincinnati, September, 1912.

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The Shepherd of Tekoah

The Shepherd of Tekoah

Chapter I.

An End to War.

"Damascus has fallen!
Damascus has fallen!!"

The whole city of Samaria rang with the glad tidings. Fleet-footed runners, who had started with this precious news on the day of victory, covered more than one hundred and fifty miles to bring it to the capital of the Kingdom of Israel.

They crossed mountains and swam rivers, fairly flew over fertile plains and through busy cities, shouting, while there was breath in their bodies:

"Damascus has fallen!"

Many of the messengers fell exhausted on the way, but others took up the wonderful news from the front and carried it on, until the whole northern part of the kingdom knew of the king's victory.

Little by little the whole story was told to the eager Samarians—how the king, Jeroboam II, himself led the hosts of Israel; how attack followed attack upon the fortified Syrian capital; how the first breach was made in the outer wall; how the valiant Israelites rushed upon the enemy, and how the final victory was won for Israel's standard.

What a celebration was there in Samaria that long-to-be-remembered day!

Not since the days when the first Jeroboam led the rebellion of the ten tribes against King Solomon's weak son, Rehoboam, and established the independent kingdom of the Ten Tribes, with Samaria as the capital, was there such rejoicing in that city.

We can picture the celebration in our mind's eye; we cannot describe it in words.

Parents who had sent their sons to the war now laughed happily through their tears, because there would be an end to war.

Sisters whose brothers doubtless lay dead in and about the walls of the doomed city, now sang songs of joy in the midst of their weeping, because there would be an end to war.

The strongest and finest men of Israel had given their lives for their country, but now, thank God! there would be an end to war.

The fall of Damascus meant the end of a hundred and fifty years' war, commenced by Ben-hadad I, of Syria, against Israel, long before Jeroboam's great-grandfather established the dynasty of Jehu on the throne of Israel.

It meant even more than that; it meant the end of Syrian oppression, and, perhaps, a period of peace to the long-troubled and war-ridden kingdom of Israel.

No wonder, then, that there were feasts of rejoicing and full-throated cries:

"Damascus has fallen! Long live King Jeroboam!"
"Damascus has fallen! Long life to the house of Jehu!"

All day and all night Samaria swarmed with people. The streets were thronged with shouting men

and women who had come from Geba and Dothan, and even from Jezreel on the north, and from Schechem and Shiloh and Bethel on the south, to help celebrate the great victory.

Sacrifices were brought at all the sanctuaries of Israel—in Bethel, in Dan, in Gilgal, in Beersheba.

Priests and people brought thank-offerings, and, together, sang praises to God:

"God is my light and my salvation,
Whom shall I fear?
God is the strength of my life,
Of whom shall I be afraid?"

Truly, God was on the side of Israel, or else the Syrians could not have been defeated. He was showing favor to the Northern Kingdom, and was pleased with Israel, for was not Judah, the Southern Kingdom, too, paying tribute to Jeroboam?

And so they recalled how Joash, the father of the great Jeroboam II, defeated Amaziah, king of Judah, took him captive, partially demolished the walls of Jerusalem, and looted the Temple in Jerusalem.

The older men of Samaria remembered the fine sarcasm with which Joash treated Amaziah's challenge to war, in his reply:

"The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, 'Give thy daughter to my son to wife,' and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle."

How young and old laughed at the repetition of this clever little story that compared Israel to a cedar in its strength and to a wild beast in its fighting

power, and Judah to a poor, little thistle to be tramped upon!

Jeroboam II was indeed a son of his father. Joash humbled Judah, Israel's enemy on the south; Jeroboam humbled Syria, Israel's enemy on the north.

Not satisfied with the fall of Damascus, however, Jeroboam pushed right ahead and captured Lodebar and Karnaim, which he turned over to Assur-dan, king of Assyria.

The fact is that Jeroboam had to do this. It was his end of a bargain made with Assur-dan. It was agreed between the two that the Assyrians would keep their hands off during the war between Israel and Syria.

As a reward for Assur-dan's non-interference, Jeroboam undertook to capture these two cities and turn them over to the Syrians to become part of his empire.

Having fulfilled his agreement, Jeroboam continued his victorious march further north, and never stopped until he had laid low the pride of Hamath, the prosperous city on the river Orontes.

Jeroboam II, thus had the great distinction of restoring the boundaries of the Kingdom of Israel to the proportions of the empire of David and Solomon, "from the entrance of Hamath unto the sea of Arabah," which is the Dead Sea.

Wonderful was the reception prepared for the king and his victorious army on their return to Samaria. More people had come to the city to join in the welcoming demonstration than had pilgrimed to

Jerusalem on the Passover, in the days before the division of the kingdom.

The northern walls were massed with people, and the gates were decorated with flowers. Priests and elders, dressed in spotless white and led by the high priest, Amaziah, himself, awaited Jeroboam and his generals just outside of the city and preceded them to the gates. Such an acclamation of joy as greeted the king upon his entrance through the gates had never been heard in Samaria.

Passing through a triumphal arch of stone and marble, the procession was met by hundreds of maidens and children, clothed in linen and gold, who led the way, singing and strewing flowers in the path of the heroes.

A turn in the street led to the market-place. Here had been built a great triumphal arch of ivory and gold, beyond which was an altar, specially erected for the occasion.

Passing through the arch, Amaziah and Jeroboam mounted the steps that led to the altar. All the rest remained below. When the priest and the king faced the people the singing and the shouting ceased. With due ceremony, and according to the rites, the king brought a thanks-offering to God for his victories and his safe return. When Amaziah placed the sacrifice upon the altar a deep hush fell over the great assembly.

Slowly the smoke of the sacrifice rose to heaven, and the multitude of people, like one man, fell on their knees and worshiped.

Jeroboam was deeply moved. Solemnly he raised his right hand, and, from the depths of his grateful heart, he said:

"Peace to the house of Israel!"

Like the rumble of a mighty wave rolling toward the shore came the response from the sea of worshiping people:

"To the house of Israel, peace!"

For one whole week after Jeroboam's triumphant entry into the capital, Samaria was a place of feasting and rejoicing. When, by command of the king, the celebration came to an end and the people began to return to their homes, each one, on leaving the city's gates, repeated to himself the now answered prayer of over a century:

"Peace to the house of Israel!
To the house of Israel, peace!"

Chapter II.

In the Days of Prosperity.

It was market day in Samaria.

Great throngs of people crowded all the streets. They jostled each other good naturedly, traded, bargained, renewed acquaintanceship, spoke of their home towns and expressed the hope of meeting again.

The market place itself, where the many bazaars displayed wonderful merchandise from many cities and many lands, was an especially lively place. It was gay with life and color. Gilded chariots and ivory-bedecked litters passed to and fro. Heralds announced particularly important personages and escorts and cleared a way for them with whip or spear. Military men and merchant princes, with many followers, often scattered the smaller merchants and petty traders in their path through the market. Many were caught under the wheels of the vehicles of the rich when they did not get out of the way quickly enough. Others were purposely thrust aside by the wealthy aristocrats simply to show their disdain.

It was a typical Samarian market day—crowds and noise; buying and selling; idle rich and drudging poor; haughty military grandees, in their resplendent attires, and cowed, miserable beggars in their rags; color and laughter at the bazaars, and tears and sorrow at the auction block just across the way—always crowds and always noise.

The auctioneer was shouting above the general din the good points of a man who had just been placed on the block.

"To be sold till the Jubilee Year," he cried. "How much am I bid?"

A clerk read the court's decree that this man was to be sold for debt. It was signed by the judges, who sat in the East Gate of Samaria. The document was a cold, formal statement. It did not take into account the reason why this man, in the full vigor of manhood, had fallen into debt. His creditors had pushed the poor fellow hard for their money. He could not pay. He pleaded with the judges that the sickness of his wife and children had reduced him to direst need, but it was without avail. He could not pay his debts and must work them off as a slave for seven years; that was the decree of the court. After seven years he would be a free man again. Cases like this were very common.

The keen eye of the auctioneer noted a man at the far edge of the platform who had made several attempts as if to bid during the sale. He was a middle-aged man, tall and thin, but wiry. His face was bronzed from exposure to sun and wind. He wore a long woolen mantel that completely covered him, even to the sandals on his feet.

"How much am I bid?" The auctioneer spoke the question directly to this country yokel, while he winked at the crowd in front of him. He thought that the fellow who came to the market clad in such clothes, instead of his Sabbath best, had little money

with him to buy a slave, and less use for one. So he spoke the question again to the "farmer," expecting an answer that would make the crowd laugh and put them in good humor.

The country yokel again made as if to speak but changed his mind and backed away, facing the auctioneer.

He had hardly backed three paces when he bumped into some one. He was pushed violently forward, and, before he could recover, winced under a stinging crack from a whip.

He turned quickly and faced two brutish looking men, swearing at his awkwardness and cursing his impudence for being in the way.

The "farmer" could have given a good account of himself in a square fight with these men, but he knew better than to start a fight with them. They were the foreguards to a splendid pleasure outfit—the outfit of a very rich Samarian merchant. A fight meant arrest and punishment at the hands of Samarian judges, whether he was in the right or not. The rich of Samaria had the judges under their thumbs. A stranger or a poor man, in fact, anyone who had no influence in Samaria, stood little chance of getting justice.

So the farmer cleared the way. Standing aside, he watched the chariot drawn by four Egyptian steeds, surrounded by guards, slaves and hangers-on, make its way through the crowded market place, paying no attention to the rights and privileges of any one. The wealthy merchant in the chariot held his

head up proudly. He greeted only the prosperous looking; upon the curious crowds and small merchants, he looked down with contempt.

The merchant whose attendants had so grossly insulted the "farmer" drew up before a great palace. Rich carpets were spread from the chariot to the steps of the mansion. The rich man's followers bowed low as he passed up the steps and through the door held open by attendants. Some followed him into the house; others mingled with the people in the market place; the slaves went to their quarters by a rear entrance.

The stranger in the woolen robe was not as green as he looked. He had witnessed the growth and prosperity of Samaria during the last twenty years of Jeroboam II's reign until it became the busiest trade center in the Empire.

Leaning against the stone column, on which was graven the record of Jeroboam's victory over Damascus, and still smarting from the lash of the servant's whip, he recalled the story of Samaria's great strides to its present prosperous condition.

The subjugation of Judah on the south, which this farmer had good cause to remember; the conquest of Syria on the north and Jeroboam's peace compact with Assyria further east, assured a long period of peaceful development within the empire.

New highways were built, so that the farther ends of the country were brought close together for business purposes. Farmers could bring their crops to the cities easily. Many remained in the cities and engaged in business pursuits. Caravans traveled great

distances, bringing precious luxuries from one part of the empire to another, and even from foreign countries.

Many thus became very wealthy. They built themselves palaces for winter residences in the cities and palaces for summer residences in the country. To get rich seemed to be the aim of everybody; and, with riches, came ostentation and luxuriant living.

The city of Samaria, especially, was the center for Israel's most wealthy men. Their homes were wonders of stone and ivory. The furnishings rivaled in beauty the splendor of the outside. The rooms were high and spacious. The beds and tables and chairs were of the finest wood of Lebanon, carved by the craftsmen of Tyre, and inlaid with ivory. The coverings were of the richest purple and gold from Egypt and the Indies. Wine cellars were a part of every house and feasts were spread whenever the occasion offered itself. Fatted lambs and calves were slaughtered daily to supply the tables, and new instruments were invented to furnish music at the feasts.

This, however, was only one side of the picture of Samaria in its days of greatest prosperity. The "farmer" knew that there was another, much less beautiful. While the rich were growing richer, the poor were growing poorer.

The rich, thinking only of themselves, their wealth, their power, their good times, cheated and oppressed the poor unmercifully. They gave false weights and short measure and sold at high prices, poor stuff at that. They would drive a poor man into debt and have him sold into slavery; so that human beings be-

came a drug on the market, as it were. In fact, at the very auction which the "farmer" watched that day, one poor man was sold for the price of a pair of shoes. The poor had even no chance to get justice in the courts. The greed for money placed corrupt officials in office and the offenders bribed them to the undoing of the poor and needy.

Strange to say, the Israelites, in whose midst there were those who lived such scandalous lives and treated the poor people so outrageously—the Israelites—nevertheless, believed in their hearts that they had not forgotten God. They believed that God was with them; that He loved them above all other peoples; that He guarded and protected them; that He sent them all their blessings of prosperity and peace.

This is the way they reasoned it out: Had not God helped them to defeat Judah? Had not God been with them when they crushed their ancient foe, Syria? Did not God send them rain in season, so that crops were good and plentiful?

"Therefore," said they, "God is on our side. Let us go up to the sanctuaries and offer sacrifices upon His altars."

And so, at festival times, Bethel and Gilgal, and Dan and Beersheba were crowded with the rich, offering their sacrifices, feasting, drinking and rejoicing. It never entered their minds that God is the God of the poor, as well as of the rich. Though they continued to rob and oppress and enslave the poor and the needy and the helpless, they were perfectly satisfied with the idea that all God asked of them was to offer the prescribed sacrifices. If there were any who

knew differently, or thought differently, they seemingly did not dare say so in anybody's hearing. For the poor, these were, indeed, evil times.

At this point in his musings, the "farmer" actually shuddered. He was not aware that his peculiar dress and his peculiar position at the moment had attracted attention. While he was contrasting in his mind the great difference between the rich and the poor in Samaria, several men, having nothing better to do, had stopped to stare at the yokel. As is always the case when people stand in the street and gawk, a large crowd soon assembled. A military chariot stopped near the group of curious gazers to see what was going on. Soon several others were halted there, including gilded and gaudy litters, in which fashionably dressed women were being conveyed. All stared, called each other's attention to the queerly garbed stranger, and finally laughed outright.

The man who was the center of attraction became aware of the crowd only when he had reached that point in his thoughts, the horrible picture of which had made him shudder. When he noticed the crowd, he gasped. He recovered from his astonishment quickly, however. He opened his mantle, showing his gaunt, powerful form. He raised his head and faced the crowd. His face, strong and sunburned, was tense and drawn for a moment; then it relaxed. Deep lines, expressing severe pain, were furrowed in his forehead.

The crowd, in turn, was astonished at the complete change that had come over the "yokel." Before they recovered from their mistaken opinion about the man,

they saw him clinch his fists in determination and heard his voice ring out clearly and distinctly, above the din of the market place:

"Hear ye,
Who turn justice to wormwood
And cast down righteousness to the earth;
Who trample upon the poor
And afflict the just;
Who take a bribe
And thrust aside the needy in the gate:
I know how manifold are your transgressions,
Saith the Lord, God of hosts,
And how mighty your sins,
The end of my people Israel hath come,
Saith the Lord, God of hosts,
I can no longer forgive."

This outspoken attack upon Samaria, its rich, and its military nobles, was so extraordinary that it amazed the crowd. Having spoken, the "farmer" turned away and was soon lost among the bazaars. Some looked after him, astonished at his recklessness in laying himself open to the revenge of the powers that be. Others looked after him, amazed at his bravery and fearlessness.

That night many in Samaria had heard of the unknown stranger and his speech in the market place. At many dinner tables the question was asked:

"Who is this man who dares to lift his voice against the high and powerful in behalf of the poor and downtrodden?"

"Who is this man who dares to proclaim the doom of the Kingdom of Israel in the days of its greatest prosperity?"

Chapter III.

The Man Who Dared.

There lived a man in the little town of Tekoah, in the Kingdom of Judah, twelve miles south of Jerusalem, who made a living from "dressing sycamore trees."

In ancient Palestine, the fruit of the sycamore that grew in Judah was dried, ground into flour and used for making coarse bread. This bread was eaten by the very poorest people, who could not afford to buy wheat.

Now, the man who lived from gathering poor fruit, out of which poor bread was made, for poor people, must, himself, have been very poor.

But a poor man may love his country as much as a rich man; and, when the foolish war between Amaziah of Judah and Joash of Israel broke out, this "dresser of sycamore trees," from Tekoah, followed his king on the battlefield.

At the battle in which Amaziah was defeated and Joash gained his greatest victory, leading to the destruction of part of the fortifications of Jerusalem, this man, fighting valiantly in the front ranks, with many other patriotic Judeans, laid down his life for his country. He was buried in the trenches, an unknown hero, whose name is not even in the records.

But history gives us the record of his son, named Amos. Left with his widowed mother, after the war, the burden of finding a living for the two was soon

thrust upon him. There was only one thing that he knew by which he could earn money—"dressing sycamore trees."

He went at his work with a vim. As he grew up, and his and his mother's needs increased, his wits became sharpened. Why could he not dry and grind the sycamore fruit himself? This he did and increased his income. Then, his mother suggested that she would bake the flour into bread, if he would sell it. Amos agreed to that, and the little family thrived.

One day Amos brought the idea to his mother that their sycamore bread could be sold at a better price in Jerusalem. He asked for permission to go there and his mother, desiring more that her son should see the capital than that he should get higher prices for the bread, said:

"Go, my son, and God be with thee."

That trip to Jerusalem and the several trips that followed, made a great impression upon the young man and gave a remarkable turn to his whole life.

He saw Jerusalem, of whose beauty and glory his father had often told him, a fallen city. It had not yet recovered from the terrible results of the war with Amaziah of Israel; King Uzziah had not yet restored the treasures and vessels of which the temples had been looted; and, in the quarter of the city where Amos sold his bread, oh! such poverty, such wretchedness, such desolation!

His heart was filled with grief. He went to the trenches where he knew his father lay in an unmarked grave, and wept bitterly. There, at his father's grave, a wonderful thought came to him. A new light

"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."—Amos IV, 12.

entered into his life and a great determination for his future career. His mind once made up, he soon outlined a plan for himself, and having the determination to carry the plan through, he made rapid progress.

With the additional profits that resulted from his business trips to Jerusalem, Amos bought sheep and goats and became a shepherd, as well as a gatherer of sycamore fruit.

The great rocky wilderness that slopes from the limestone hills of Tekoah down to the Dead Sea was just the place where sheep and goats could prosper.

So, in addition to the thriving business of his old trade, he dealt, also, in goat milk and wool and in the animals themselves.

Often, as he sat on the hillsides, in the cool of the sycamores, and watched his flocks, his mind would turn to the things he saw and heard in Jerusalem. He had heard there that Bethel, one of the sanctuaries of Israel, was always filled with pilgrims at festival time—and he determined upon a trip to Bethel, twenty-two miles north of Tekoah.

He returned greatly disheartened.

"Wealth and feasting saw I there," Amos told his mother, "and wine and song, and altars reeking with blood of fatted lambs and oxen; but God was not in the heart of the people of Israel."

His mother chided him gently. To say such things was blasphemy; for sacrifices were demanded of all the people by the religious laws of the state; and it was also commanded that a portion of the sacrifice should be consumed by him who brought it—therefore the feasting. As to the song and wine, did not

the Sweet Singer say, "Serve the Lord with gladness?"

Amos did not reply. He knew that his good-hearted mother had given expression to the idea of God's worship as all the people, both of Israel and of Judah, at that time, understood it. They brought the sacrifices, as prescribed by the priests at the sanctuaries; a portion of the slaughtered animal was given to God on the altar, and the portion that was eaten by the sacrificer was looked upon as a meal—a banquet—participated in by him and God, together; such a meal soon became a feast, with wine and song. Unfortunately, these banquets often degenerated into drunkenness and revelry.

Amos felt that such worship of God was not right, but he had not yet discovered what was wrong.

When the period of prosperity opened up for Israel, with Jeroboam II's conquest of Damascus, Judah also felt the good times. Amos, now an experienced master herdsman, took the advantage afforded by the peace and improved business conditions. He traveled with his stock-in-trade to far northern markets, to Samaria, to Damascus, to Hamath, and, from there his caravans wended their way east, even as far as the City Asshur, the capital of Assyria.

He was not a mere trader, however. He was a close observer and a student of men and things wherever he led his caravans. He talked with strangers about other lands which he had not visited and became, therefore, well acquainted with political, religious and social conditions everywhere.

All this made no change in the outward circumstances of Amos. Success did not turn his head. He did not build himself a palace, but remained with his mother in the village of Tekoah, where he was born and raised. He did not indulge himself with fine clothes and high living, but continued to dress simply and live plainly.

His mother was often greatly worried about Amos. When he returned from a far northern and eastern trip he would betake himself to his beloved hills and sycamore groves and flocks. He would work with the most lowly of his sycamore fruit gatherers; but he would often spend hours by himself in the woods or in the wilderness.

It was during these lonesome hours that Amos added high thinking to his simple living. The grandeur of Samaria and the wealth he saw displayed in Bethel did not deceive him. Neither did the peace compact between Jeroboam II and Assur-dan III blind him to the exact state of affairs in the relationship between the two countries.

He knew that Tiglath-Pileser III, the successor of Assur-dan, had crushed all rebellions in Assyria, which Assur-dan III had failed to do, and was reorganizing the army of the great empire. He knew that Damascus, which had been weakened by Jeroboam II beyond hope of recovery, would be the first point of conquest for the young and energetic Pul, as Tiglath-Pileser was called. Next before him, to the south, lay the rich Kingdom of Israel, the booty from whose palaces and sanctuaries would be an

enormous prize for the Assyrian emperor and his army. After Damascus, must come Samaria!

In other words, Amos saw distinctly that the time was near when Israel would have to fight again for its independence and its very life; and he asked himself, "Is Israel prepared?"

Clearly it was not. The rich had become unfit for war, because of their luxuriant living. The poor had become unfit for war, because of their oppression by the rich. Should the Assyrians invade the land, how could such a nation of weaklings defend its home and its liberty?

Israel must be warned! It must be awakened from its stupidity to a realization of the danger ahead! The rich must cease their extravagances and become manly men again! The poor must be given their rights, must be treated justly and righteously, that they may become manly men again! Only a nation of moral, upright, God-fearing men can hope for victory! If the Assyrians should defeat and crush Israel, it will be God's punishment visited upon Israel for its sins and crimes.

Amos had often discussed these things with his mother. She was not surprised, therefore, when, one day, upon his return from a long trip into Assyria, Amos said to her, "I am called to the cities of Israel. My mission will be prolonged many days."

The good woman knew and understood. Laying her hands upon his head, she repeated the blessing with which she had blessed him when, as a timid young man, he made his first trip to Jerusalem:

"Go, my son, and God be with thee."

And so it was that Amos, the herdsmen of Tekoah, had dared to speak for the poor people in Samaria, and to prophesy the fall of the Kingdom.

His first speech attracted little attention, but others, in various parts of the country, to the same effect, followed. Many laughed at them; few thought seriously about them.

But Amos was not so easily discouraged. He concluded that the wrong idea the people had about God, how to worship Him and what He demanded of them, was the cause of all the evil. Amos, therefore, selected the sanctuaries during festival season as the place where he must do his preaching.

He went especially to Bethel, the king's sanctuary, where Jeroboam brought his sacrifices and where the great nobles and soldiers and richest merchants gathered and reveled in their feasts.

One day Amos broke in upon a reveling group, with the unexpected call:

"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!"

Such a call was, indeed, unexpected. The Israelites, assembled at the sanctuary, offering their sacrifices, believed that they were *with* their God. Some one told Amos as much, and the crowd jeered at the fool, who evidently did not understand his religion.

This laughter ceased suddenly, however, when Amos began to chant a mournful dirge:

"Hear ye this word which I take up for a lamentation over you, O house of Israel!
Fallen, no more to rise, is the virgin Israel!
Cast down upon her soil she lies,
There is none to raise her up.

The city that taketh the field with a thousand,
Hath but a hundred left;
And the one that taketh the field with a hundred,
Hath but ten left."

A young officer, who felt that the army, the pride of the Kingdom, had been grossly insulted, rushed forth from the crowd and exclaimed, hotly: "Thou art a false prophet! Prophesy no more."

Then he continued, explaining to Amos and to the crowd, that God could not have sent such a message to the house of Israel. God was with them, he said, and was gracious to them. Israel was stronger, mightier than ever before and Israel was, that very day, at Bethel, at Gilgal, at Beersheba, bringing thanks-offerings to God.

Amos stood stolidly by and listened until the young man had finished. Then he replied:

"Thus saith God to the house of Israel:
Ye that oppress the poor and crush the needy,
That trample upon the just and cause the poor of the land to fail,
Seek *Me* and live,
But seek not Bethel,
And Gilgal do not enter,
To Beersheba go not over;
For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity
And Bethel shall come to naught.
Seek God and not evil
That ye may live
And so God, the Lord of hosts,
May be with you, as you say.
Hate evil and love good,
And establish justice in the gate.
Perhaps God will be gracious,
The God of hosts, to a remnant of Joseph."

The young officer shook his head in disgust and walked away. Others, however, remained awhile, meditating upon what Amos had said.

Amos, too, when he went his way, felt that his words had made an impression. He thought they had fallen, like seeds, upon fertile soil. Would these seeds take root? Would they grow and flourish? Would they bear fruit when the crisis for Israel came?

But first a crisis for Amos came, when he had to fight for his life.

Chapter IV.

Treason and a Fight.

For some time, now, Amos had been preaching his new and formerly unheard-of ideas, to the effect that God prefers rather that man be just to his fellowmen than that he offer sacrifices; that Israel had become weakened because of its indulgence in luxuriant living, on the one hand, and because of the oppression and ill treatment of the poor and needy, on the other; that God would be with the people against their enemies only when the people turned away from their idolatrous worship and sought God, by doing good and hating evil.

And he had been rewarded with laughter and jeers and derision on the part of the people he tried to save!

Any other man would have given up long ago; not so Amos. His rebuffs, however, made him somber and morose.

In his great address at Bethel he held out the hope to Israel that God might forgive His people for their crimes and sins if they began to lead godly lives. His continued failure to impress the people with this message, however, finally led him to the belief that God would measure out the severest justice to Israel, in accordance with their sins, and without mercy.

Amos had become a well-known figure at all the sanctuaries. Most of the people thought him to be

one of those wandering dervishes, known as "Sons of the Prophets," who made their living by a kind of fortune telling, or forecasting the future, as did Samuel in the early days when he told Saul where the lost asses were; only, that Amos was one of the Sons of the Prophets run mad, judging from the way he talked and the strange things he said.

This did not trouble Amos. What worried him was the fact that the people would not listen to his addresses.

So, in the year 745, he journeyed again to Bethel, where a great festival was to be celebrated. He was determined that the people should hear. He was well prepared, too. Instead of beginning with a condemnation of Israel, he used new tactics:

"Thus saith God," he began. "For three transgressions of Damascus, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof."

That was interesting. We always like to hear about the punishments that others will receive for their misdeeds, even if we close our ears to those that threaten us.

And, as for Damascus, she was Israel's ancient foe, and the listeners rather liked the idea that God was to visit her with destruction.

When Amos had recounted the sins of Damascus and announced that "the people of Syria shall go into captivity into Kir," there was loud applause.

Some cried, "Let the Prophet speak!"

Amos continued. He mentioned the sins for which God would punish Gaza, Tyre, Idumia, Ammon,

Moab, and each period was greeted with volleys of applause.

Amos paused for a moment. He swallowed a lump that had risen in his throat and lowered his voice. He spoke, sadly and regretfully:

"Thus saith God,
For three transgressions of Judah,
Yea, for four, I will not revoke its punishment.
Because they reject God's law,
And do not keep His statutes;
Because their lies have caused them to err,
(The lies) After which their fathers did walk.
Therefore, I will send a fire upon Judah
And it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem."

Poor, weak little Judah! The Prophet was declaring the doom of his own country! It was a thing to laugh at! And how they did laugh!

But it was no laughing matter for Amos. His heart was wrung with woe from his own people. He waited for the uproar to subside, and then went on to the very point which he had come to make:

"Thus saith God,
For three transgressions of Israel,
Yea, for four, I will not revoke its punishment.
Because they sell the righteous for money,
And the needy for a pair of shoes;
Who trample on the head of the poor,
And turn aside the way of the humble.
Upon garments taken in pledge they stretch themselves beside every altar,
And the wine of those who have been fined they drink in the house of their God."

Jeers and threatening cries were hurled at Amos from all directions, but he stood his ground.

With the art of a master orator he won back his displeased audience. Passionately he poured forth the story of Israel and its relationship to God—a story he knew so well—and brought the people back to breathless attention. He recounted the wonders God had done with and for Israel from the days when He brought them out of Egypt, poor, miserable slaves, until this day of their wealth and glory.

Here someone stepped out from the crowd and took up the argument for the people. If all this beautiful story is true, he claimed, then God may punish and destroy all the nations that Amos had mentioned; but Israel, to whom God had shown special favors, even up to this day, God will not destroy.

Quick as a flash the Prophet answered:

"Are ye not as the Cushites to me,
O children of Israel? saith God.
Did I not bring up Israel out of the land of Egypt
And the Philistines from Caphtor
And the Syrians from Kir?
(But) you, especially, have I known of all the races of the earth,
Therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.
Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom,
And I will destroy it from the face of the earth.
An adversary shall surround the land,
And shall strip from thee thy strength;
And thy palaces shall be plundered.
Verily, I am now raising up against you
O house of Israel, a nation,
And they shall oppress you
From the entrance of Hamath
Even to the brook of the Arabah,
Saith the Lord, God of hosts."

"Treason! Treason!" rose up the cry from the several army men who had been listening.

"Treason! Treason!" was shouted immediately from many directions.

The army officers who had raised the cry now rushed toward Amos, threatening him with bodily harm.

"Treason! Treason!" was echoed by most of the crowd. Hundreds now surged forward and things looked bad for the Prophet.

To meet this danger, Amos brought into play all the strength and power that he had stored up during his shepherding days. Out in the wilderness near Tekoah he had often fought with robbers who had stolen his sheep, and, like David, even with wild beasts that had stolen his lambs.

Prepared just for this kind of an emergency, keen of eye and alert of mind, he met the leaders as they came on.

Unfortunately for Amos, there was nothing that could afford him protection from the rear. He could meet any number that might attack him face to face; but while he was guarding in front someone might strike him in the back—and he was surrounded by the mob.

"Traitor! Traitor!" they shouted.

His blood boiled with anger. He, a traitor! He, guilty of treason! Why, he was the only man who saw the danger of his people and had ventured to warn them!

"Seek God and ye shall live!" kept flashing through his mind. But this was no time for preaching, not even for thinking. It was time for action.

And act he did!

The weak, undergrown army officers were like men of straw before Amos and he disposed of them as easily. With the speed of lightning he turned face, fearing an attack from the rear. There, however, the people had not awakened to what was going on.

Facing front again, he saw that the army officers had not yet recovered from his blows. They were sprawled on the ground before him and a few of the people were laughing at their discomfiture.

Amos had no desire to continue the fight and started to help the officers up; but, at that moment, he felt two pairs of hands lay hold of his mantle at the neck.

A sudden turn, a quick stretching of his brawny arms, like a swimmer making for speed, and the two men, merchants, clad in their holiday finery, were pushed to either side into the crowd.

Now, as soon as the bystanders saw with what ease Amos was handling his opponents, they began to laugh and take sides. A crowd always does that. Some urged Amos to go on fighting; others urged the sprawling victims to attack.

Amos, however, was not there to fight, nor did his opponents fancy a good beating at his hands. In the meantime a small group of the king's guard came up, post haste, and began to disperse the crowd.

The crowd scattered, but gathered again in various streets, in small groups, discussing the unusual occurrences of the day.

They spoke, in whispers, overawed by the fearlessness of the Prophet—some by his ability in self-defense; some by the force of his speeches.

In the palaces of the rich and mighty, gathered in Bethel at that time, Amos—what he said and what he did—was the topic of conversation no less than he was in the streets, only in one of these palaces was hatched a clever scheme for the Prophet's undoing.

Chapter V.

Priest Against Prophet.

That very night the most prominent people in Israel—military and civilian—assembled at Bethel, and decided that something must be done to get rid of the Prophet. They considered Amos crazy, and, therefore, dangerous. A little group of leaders gathered in the house of one of the merchant princes of Samaria to adopt a definite plan of action.

The High Priest, Amaziah, was called into consultation. He saw the seriousness of the matter, as they all did. Such preaching must be stopped!

"This man," spoke one of the priests, "is destroying the worship of God in Israel. If we are no longer to bring sacrifices on God's chosen altars, wherewith shall we worship him? Besides," he added very pointedly, "without sacrifices the income of the priesthood will be ruined, and the sons of Aaron will be reduced from their high and holy office to beggary."

"Nay, this is not the worst," began another priest, who did not think so much of his income from the sacrifices as the former speaker. "The sons of Aaron can work, as do other men."

"What is more serious," he continued, "is, that this Prophet proclaims all other people as equal in the sight of God with Israel; that God has performed wonders for them, as for us. I fear," he concluded solemnly and with bowed head, "that if

such teaching will continue, Israel will lose faith in its God."

A captain of the host sprang to his feet. "You priests," he said, savagely, "worry about many minor things. This man is telling the people that God, Himself, is raising up a powerful nation to destroy our great empire. He is filling our peaceful people with dread and fear of the imagined enemy and will disturb the peace of our country."

"Yea," cried a wealthy merchant, "and its business prosperity."

"All of which," added another merchant and slave dealer, "is, as our friend has said," looking at the captain, "simply imagination. The actual danger lies in his arousing the common people. He tells the poor that they are not getting their rights; that they are not being judged honestly; that the weak and the needy ought to be protected and helped—by us, by us! As if we have anything to do with them! I tell you that it is here the danger lurks. If this crazy Prophet is not silenced immediately, the merchant and military classes will face open rebellion on the part of the common horde."

The last speaker seemed to have said the final word on the subject. All were silent, their eyes turned toward Amaziah. The aged priest had not yet ventured an opinion; but he had been thinking deeply on what was said by the others. He agreed, for the most part, with the speakers who had preceded him; but he counseled caution and delay. "Perhaps, now that the Prophet has seen opposition,"

Amaziah concluded, "he will quit and go home to Judah."

But Amos did not quit, nor did he go home. The fight, that morning, was a mere incident, to be forgotten; but his mission to his people burned deep in his soul, a flame that could not be quenched.

On the day of the conclusion of the great festival, Amos again appeared in the sanctuary. This time it did not take long for a crowd to gather. In fact, most of the people were looking for him to appear. Even the richest and most exclusive, who usually are not interested in such men, had heard about Amos and had come to see and hear him, expecting something unusual to occur.

Amos did not waste any time. Without preparatory remarks, he gave voice to his warning call:

"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!"

Hardly had the words left the Prophet's lips, when a man stepped forward from the crowd, and facing Amos with threatening fists, exclaimed:

"Hold thy peace! Thou art a false Prophet. Who hath sent thee to prophesy?"

Here was a challenge to Amos. Who, indeed, had appointed him a Prophet? Who had set him up to judge the people's wrongdoing? Who had commanded him to declare Israel's doom? What entitled him to speak in the name of God?

This challenge, however, was just what Amos was looking for. He had wanted a number of times to correct the mistaken idea the people had of him.

There were, in the land, the long-established Schools of Prophets. These schools were under the

protection of the king. At the head of each was a leader, like Samuel, Elijah and Elisha of the olden days. The leader was called "The Seer" and his pupils "Sons of the Prophets."

Now, the Seers and Sons of the Prophets, with the exception of such strong and powerful characters as the three great men mentioned, usually did the bidding of the king and his officers, and prophesied to please them.

Amos was not a member of any of these established schools. He was a free lance—in truth, the first of the independent Prophets, who cried out against the evils of their day and who, fearlessly and without favor, laid the blame where it belonged—on king, on priest, and on people.

Amos, therefore, grasped this opportunity to set himself aright. He answered his questioner with a series of beautiful similes:

"Do two walk together unless they be agreed?
Does a lion roar in the forest when there is no prey for him?
Does a young lion cry out in his den unless he has taken something?
Can a trumpet be blown in a city and the people not tremble?
Can calamity befall a city and God hath not sent it?
Surely, the Lord doeth nothing,
Unless He revealeth His purpose to His servants, the Prophets.
The lion hath roared; who does not fear?
The Lord God hath spoken; who can but prophesy?"

God, then, it was, not the head of a School of Prophets, or a king, or a priest, who had sent Amos to prophesy! He, himself, had no desire to speak these terrible things he was saying to his people. A

force over which he had no control—God, had impelled him to his task. It was the still, small voice of which Elijah spoke. Though his heart bled, while delivering the message, Amos could not help himself. God had commanded him; he had but to obey!

Before the challenger could continue the argument, there was a disturbance on the outskirts of the crowd. A murmur arose and all craned their necks to see what was going on. The crowd opened, forming a wide aisle, through which there advanced a tall, majestic figure, with flowing robe and gray beard.

"The High Priest!"

"Amaziah!"

"The High Priest!"

The people whispered to each other and an expectant silence followed, as the venerable priest walked through the row of bowed heads, toward the sanctuary. He stopped in front of Amos and looked at him curiously.

Amaziah was an old man, but as erect as a cedar in Lebanon. He was dressed in an ephod, the holy garment of his office. The robe was of fine twined linen, with threads of blue, scarlet and purple, embroidered in gold. Two shoulder pieces, fastened to the shoulders of the ephod with cords of "wreathed gold," came down the front of the garment to just above the girdle, where they were fastened with two golden rings. Held by these cords above, and by blue ribbons through the golden rings below, was the breastplate, the insignia of the High Priest. On the front of the breastplate, in gold settings, were twelve

precious stones, four rows of three stones each, on each of which was engraved the name of one of the tribes of Israel. A mitre on his head completed the High Priest's holy vestments.

Thus brilliantly arrayed, "for glory and for beauty," Amaziah made a great contrast to the simply clad shepherd, robed in his woolen mantle, as they faced each other.

The splendor of Amaziah, his age and his authority, the tension caused by the struggle that was imminent between the Priest and the Prophet, overawed the assembly. There was a deep silence, like the calm before a heavy downpour.

Amos, cool and collected, always prepared for an emergency, bowed low to Amaziah out of respect to his gray head. Amaziah, who was equally prepared for an emergency, smiled at Amos, kindly, in greeting.

Amos, of course, did not know that Amaziah was working out a plan that had been outlined previous to his starting for the sanctuary. Only those who were in the Priest's confidence knew that he had sent a message to King Jeroboam, when it was reported that a crowd had gathered about Amos and that the Prophet would, no doubt, deliver another address. The message to Jeroboam read:

"Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear his words. For thus hath Amos said, 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.'"

The messenger proceeded, post haste, to the palace of the king, and Amaziah, quietly and with dignity, went to the sanctuary.

Hardly had Amos lifted his head from his low salute, when Amaziah addressed him:

"O seer! Go, flee away to the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there; but prophesy not again any more in Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is the royal residence."

How the Priest misunderstood the Prophet! Just because Bethel was the king's sanctuary and the royal residence and the seat of all the mighty in the land of Israel, Amos had selected it, above all other places, to preach his message there.

But Amaziah's little speech contained something more important to Amos than this. Amaziah had addressed the Prophet as "seer," he had taken him for the leader of a "School of Prophets." Amos immediately disclaimed such a questionable distinction. He answered Amaziah:

"I am no Prophet, nor am I the son of a Prophet; but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees, when God took me from following the flock and God said to me, 'Go, prophesy against My people Israel.'"

Entirely unprepared for such an answer, and not quite certain whether he understood what Amos meant by his claim that he had taken his orders direct from God, Amaziah was disconcerted. Amos did not give the Priest a chance to recover from his surprise and continued:

"Now, therefore, hear thou the word of God: 'Thou sayest, "Prophesy not against Israel, nor preach against the house of Isaac." ' Therefore, thus saith God, 'Thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shall die upon an unclean soil, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of this land.'"

The fearlessness of the Prophet in attacking the High Priest dismayed Amaziah and his followers greatly. The crowd, too, by its acclamations, was evidently siding with Amos. Amaziah was, therefore, placed on the defensive. In broken and halting sentences he defended himself and the people. The ancient laws of Israel, he pointed out, were being adhered to by all Israelites. He, for one, was not afraid, even if the Day of God, the judgment day, should come to-morrow.

Now, a man like Amaziah might not fear the strict judgment which, Amos said, God was to visit upon Israel; but, how about those who were guilty of the crimes of which God, through the Prophet, was accusing Israel? Amos understood this, though Amaziah did not. The Prophet was speaking to all the people and not to one man in particular. Therefore, he continued:

"Woe unto those that desire the Day of God!
Wherefore would ye have the Day of God?
It is darkness and not light.
It is when one flees from a lion,
And a bear meets him;
Or goes into a house and leans his hand upon a wall,
And a serpent bites him.
Shall not the Day of God be darkness and not light,
Yea, murky darkness, without a ray of light?"

That is why, retorted the High Priest, the people come to Bethel and Gilgal and the other sanctuaries. They bring their sacrifices to God, that He may forgive their sins, against the coming of the Day of God, when all the guilty shall be judged and punished.

Amos did not interrupt Amaziah because he was an old man, and Amos knew what courtesy was due the aged. But when the Priest had finished, the Prophet, with fine sarcasm, showed the uselessness and selfishness of the whole artificial scheme as practiced at the sanctuaries:

"Come to Bethel and transgress,
At Gilgal increase your transgressions,
And bring in the morning your sacrifices,
And every third day your tithes!
Burn some leaven bread as a thanks-offering,
And proclaim aloud the voluntary offerings,
For you love to do so, O Israelites!"

The sarcastic smile, however, suddenly faded from the speaker's lips, as he asked:

"Did ye bring me sacrifices and meal-offerings in the wilderness, forty years, O House of Israel?"

Then, with the power and fervor of the God-inspired man he was, Amos denounced bitterly the whole system of worshiping God by means of sacrifices, and delivered a message, new to his hearers, relating to what God really expected from Israel:

"I hate, I despise your feasts,
And I will take no delight in your festivals;
With your meal-offerings I will not be pleased,
And the peace-offerings of your fattlings I will not regard with favor.
Banish from me the noise of your songs;
To the melody of your viols I will not listen.
But let justice roll down as waters,
And righteousness as a never-failing stream."

These concluding sentences literally stunned the crowd. Priest and people gasped at the Prophet's

proclamation that God did not command the sacrifices at Sinai and did not care for them, but that, instead, He demanded justice and righteousness on the part of His people. The Prophet had upset all their ideas and traditions regarding their religious forms and practices, and he claimed God for his authority!

No one can tell just what might have happened, there and then, had not a company of the royal guard, in answer to Amaziah's note to the king, rushed upon the crowd and dispersed it "in the name of the king."

"In the name of the king," also, the leader of a small detachment of the guard made his way to Amos and placed him under arrest. Amos might have been successful in getting away, had he resisted; but, being a law-abiding man, he submitted to the authorities, and, long before the scattered crowd was aware of what had happened to the Prophet, he was whirled away in a chariot to the palace of the king.

Chapter VI.

The Prophet in Tekoah.

King Jeroboam II was now an old man. The vehemence and determination and aggressiveness that had made him a far-famed conqueror had been mellowed by the years and rarely, if ever, showed themselves.

The note he received from Amaziah regarding Amos, however, awoke the old spirit in him. The dispatch of the section of the royal guard with orders for the Prophet's immediate arrest was in line with the way Jeroboam did things during the days when he personally led his armies.

But instead of having Amos put in chains and thrown into a dungeon, Jeroboam had him brought into his presence. The king wanted to see and speak to the man who, according to Amaziah, had conspired against him and the God of Israel and was proclaiming the doom of his dynasty.

Amos, who had never seen the king face to face, who had never even been inside any of the royal palaces, was, nevertheless, calm and cool as usual. The splendor of the throne room and the crowd of officers and counselors did not in the least affright him. He made a low obeisance to his king and waited for the order to rise.

Jeroboam was a much keener man than Amaziah. When he saw Amos, studied his bearing, the seriousness of his face, the simplicity of his garb, he rec-

ognized at once that before him stood an uncommon man.

Amos neither smiled the smirky smile of him who is anxious to get into the king's good graces, nor did he tremble like a coward, who, being caught, feared the king. He waited for Jeroboam to speak.

From the messenger who brought Amaziah's note the king had learned something about Amos and about the things he was telling the people. Having supposed the Prophet to be either a traitor or a madman, but judging him now to be neither one nor the other, Jeroboam now was puzzled as to the manner in which to speak to him.

Jeroboam looked quizzically at Amos for a few moments and began:

"Thou, then, art the Prophet?"

"I am a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees," Amos replied.

"But thou speakest evil against the king and against the house of Israel," exclaimed Jeroboam.

"The Lord God hath commanded me," answered Amos, with deep humility.

"Thou art a traitor and thou shalt die," threatened the king.

"I can but speak," calmly replied Amos, "even if thou slay me."

Jeroboam made the threat to take the Prophet's life in order to test him. He figured that it would send Amos groveling to his knees, begging for mercy. The quiet manner in which he accepted the threat, however, puzzled the king. He concluded that Amos must be either exceedingly brave or hopelessly crazy.

Now, a man who is not afraid to die, be he brave or crazy, is a very dangerous man to have around. It would have been easy enough to behead Amos and be done with him, but Jeroboam was not a king who took his subjects' lives ruthlessly—especially when it was so simple to get rid of an undesirable one in another way.

"Then go to thy flocks and sycamores," commanded Jeroboam, "and speak to them."

The king's humorous sally called forth a great shout of laughter from those who were present. Jeroboam, smiling, waved his hand, indicating that the interview was over. The guard closed around Amos and he was led into an outer hall. After a short wait he was informed that, by command of the king, he must leave Bethel on that very day and never set foot in the Kingdom of Israel again.

Had Jeroboam himself been a wicked man like King Ahab, Amos, no doubt, would have disregarded the threat against his life and would have confronted the king in his palace, as Elijah confronted Ahab in Naboth's vineyard. Jeroboam, as ruler, however, did not oppress or mistreat the people. Being an old man, resting on the laurels of his great victories and knowing from his friends and counselors and the size of the royal treasury that his empire was rich and the people peaceful, Jeroboam probably had no idea of the corruption and injustice that was rampant in the land. He would have laughed at the thought of it.

Besides, and this was the important thing with Amos, it would have been folly for him to sacrifice

his life at this time. To die a martyr for a cause is a noble and beautiful thing—if martyrdom will in any way advance this cause. To have confronted Jeroboam or to have remained in Bethel would have meant certain death—and, to die then would have meant an end to the crusade that he was just beginning against the oppression of the poor, the denial of justice, the unrighteousness in business dealings and the misunderstanding of God and His worship; it would have meant an end to his set purpose to warn Israel against Assyria, the enemy approaching from the North, and against the inability to meet this enemy, because of the immorality that was weakening the nation.

He had plenty of time to think this over as he wended his way mournfully out of the busy and joyful thoroughfares of Bethel to his quiet, though beloved Tekoah.

Amos found to his great joy that he did not now stand alone. Many who had heard him, had understood him. When the news that he had been driven out of Israel spread, many followed him to Judah and accompanied him to his home in Tekoah.

As was always the case with Amos in a crisis, he thought quickly and arrived at a new plan of action speedily. On his way to Tekoah he selected from among his followers men who could write—scribes—and confided to them that from now on he must confine all his wealth to the spreading of his ideas throughout the empire by means of the written word.

After all, God had willed it that he should be driven back to Tekoah. Amos, as a speaker, could

address a crowd only in one place at one time. In listening to a speech, too, much of what the speaker says is lost to his hearers. Therefore, Amos concluded, God had willed it that he should return to Tekoah, write out his speeches and his warnings, send them to the farthest ends of the land that all the people may read and study and understand in order that they may return speedily to God; seek good and not evil, that the nation may live.

By day, he and his followers tended the flocks and gathered the fruit of sycamore trees. All the products that were sent to market were sold by honest weight and measure and at honest prices.

By night, he and his scribes wrote out the speeches that he had delivered in Israel, and especially in Bethel, added new ones and sent them with trusted messengers to all parts of Judah and Israel.

Amos was thus probably the first prophet who wrote down his speeches. What we have of them, however, are only fragments. There is not one speech complete as it was originally written or delivered. The fragments are collected in the Biblical book, called "Amos." Through this book the name of the humble herdsmen of Tekoah is written large in the history of religion.

It was Amos who first conceived of God as the God, not of Israel alone, but of all peoples:

"Are you not as the Ethiopians to me,
O Israel? saith God.
Did I not bring Israel up out of the land of Egypt.
And the Philistines from Caphtor,
And the Syrians from Kir?"

It was Amos who first appeared as the public champion of the poor and downtrodden, who publicly denounced the greed of the rich and the corruption of the men in power:

"For I know how manifold are your transgressions,
And how mighty are your sins—
Ye, that trample upon the poor,
That afflict the just, that take a bribe,
And that turn away the needy in the gate."

It was Amos who first cried out against the mistaken idea that animal sacrifices were what God asked of His people:

"Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and meal-offerings
In the wilderness, forty years, O house of Israel?"

It was Amos who first brought forward the great and universal truth that God judges every human being, no matter what the race or color, according to his or her acts:

"Seek good and not evil,
That ye may live;
Seek God and ye shall live."

It was Amos who first made clear, that God demands of men, above all things, justice and righteousness:

"Let justice roll down as a flood of water,
And righteousness like a never-failing stream."

We do not know definitely what became of Amos. One tradition has it that he came to Jerusalem, and, while he was denouncing Uzziah, king of Judah, Uzziah struck him on the forehead with a piece of

glowing iron. As a result of the blow, Amos died while preaching in the hope of saving his people in Jerusalem, as his father died while fighting in defense of Jerusalem, in the hope of saving his country.

The probabilities are, however, that Amos lived peacefully with his disciples among his sycamore trees near Tekoah, until he had completed the writing of his speeches and saw to their distribution all over Israel, believing that there was yet time for the people of Israel to return to God and to save the nation from the calamity that was threatening it.

The Man Who Learned His Lesson

The Man Who Learned His Lesson

Chapter I.

An Eventful Night.

Whenever Jezreel was sent early to bed, although he had been a good boy during the day, and, in addition, when his little sister and brother were ordered to go with him, he knew the evening would be another one of those that made his little heart ache.

Jezreel was only ten years old, but he was sharp and keen for his age. He understood that his parents wanted him out of reach and sound. Twice before, on similar occasions, after he had recited his night prayer and the maid-servant had tucked him in his bed, he lay with his eyes closed tight but wide awake, listening.

He knew that what he was doing was wrong, but he could not sleep. He heard his father and mother talking to each other loudly, but could not make out just what they were saying. Their voices, however, he felt, were not soft and sweet, as they usually were, when they addressed the children.

On this particular evening, as he went out of the dining-room with Lo-ruhamah, his seven-year-old sister, and Lo-ammi, his four-year-old brother, Jezreel made up his mind to do a very unusual thing. He determined not to sleep at all.

That afternoon, his father, Hosea, had returned from Bethel all out of sorts. The children had been expecting him, as they always did, when he came home from the sanctuary, to bring the usual little gifts; but the father seemed to have forgotten them. In fact, Hosea was quite irritated when, not understanding his father's mood, Lo-ammi cried for the expected sweets or trinkets.

In a little while, however, Hosea, calmed his youngest son and promised all three of the children that, in the morning, he would take them to the bazaars in the market place, to buy what they pleased.

Just then their mother, Gomer, came in. She was a beautiful woman, dressed in the latest fashions of the wealthy Samarians. Her robes were long and flowing. A veil, woven of golden threads and imported from Assyria, set off her jet-black hair. Her arms and fingers were adorned with jewel-studded bracelets and rings. She was accompanied by an Ethiopian slave.

Strange to say, the children did not rush to their mother, except little Lo-ammi, who was fond of the jeweled things she wore.

Gomer, on the other hand, did not seem to feel hurt that the children clung to their father and quite ignored her. After a formal greeting to her husband, and a pat of Lo-ammi's head, Gomer retired to her own room.

A little later the evening meal was announced, and, immediately after they had eaten, Jezreel, Loruhamah and the baby were told to go to bed.

Their attendant, satisfied that the three children were fast asleep, left the room and went about her business. Thereupon Jezreel got out of bed, moved a chair near to the door, sat down and listened.

Below he heard his father's and mother's voices. Words were spoken in a high, shrill tone, loud and harsh, but indistinct. There were short periods of silence, followed by explosive sentences that sounded like threats. If he could only understand what it was all about! But he couldn't, until, finally all was silent in the room below.

Then Jezreel heard the street door close with a bang.

Going to the window that looked out into the street, Jezreel saw his mother standing alone in front of the house. It was an unusually moonlit night. Samaria, a beautiful city in the daytime, was a very dark and gloomy place at night, except when the moon and stars reigned in their glory in clear skies. This happened to be just such a night.

The yellow moon was reflected from the red-tiled housetops. In the distance were the famous Samarian houses of stone and marble, dark and foreboding against the moonlight. Above all the houses towered the royal palace—in which Zechariah, Jeroboam II's son, had been king since his father died, six months before—with its bright, gilded domes, like a sentinel wearing a brass helmet.

But the little boy, in his night clothes, looking out of the window of his room into the moonlit and shadowed street, saw only his mother standing there below.

His attention was called suddenly away from the window by loud sobbing. He hurried to the door, but did not dare open it. He listened until the sobbing ceased. Then he returned to the window, to find the street empty and deserted. His mother had evidently gone away.

He shivered. He folded his arms tightly, as if hugging himself to keep warm. Then he brought his chair from the door to the table, sat down and listened. In the room below he heard his father walking up and down with regular step. The house was completely silent but for Hosea's footfalls.

Jezreel drew his legs up under him on the chair. He was tired and rested his head upon his arms on the table. The silence and the monotony of the regular heavy walking in the room under him, made him drowsy. His little heart ached, though he could not explain why. He tried hard to keep awake, but finally fell asleep, there at the table. At one time he shivered, when the street door of the house shut again with a bang; but he did not wake up.

Below, a great big, powerful man had been keeping up a continuous march up and down the room. He was brooding over the events that had just preceded and thinking over the years of his married life.

When Hosea first met Gomer, she lived in her father's home in one of the poorest sections of Samaria. Diblaim, Gomer's father, was a poor man and could not give his daughter the advantages other girls in Samaria enjoyed. But Hosea loved Gomer most devotedly and he married her.

Son of the priest, Beeri, Hosea inherited great wealth and a position among the priests at the Bethel sanctuary. He was thus able to give Gomer not only a beautiful home in one of the city's most beautiful suburbs, but also to introduce her to the royal and social leaders of Samaria.

After a few years, however, everything seemed to go wrong in the Hosea household. Gomer developed a weakness for luxury and jewels and fine clothes; she used to be away from the house and the children most of the time; she did not understand her husband, his desire for quiet evenings at home with the children and his dislike of the pomp and display at the court and in society. And that night, Hosea and Gomer parted, Gomer going home to her father.

Hosea felt very much oppressed. Walking up and down the room brought him no relief. So he rushed out of the house into the night, into the open, where he could breathe more freely—and think. It was the bang of the door behind him that disturbed Jezreel, asleep at the table.

But Hosea's brain was all clogged up. It could not dwell upon a single line of thought for five consecutive minutes. And yet he was so thoroughly absorbed in his thoughts, that he did not notice any number of people excitedly hurrying past him.

He walked on toward the center of the city in a daze. The first time he realized that he was not alone on the streets of Samaria was when he found himself being jostled in a wide thoroughfare leading to the market place.

Then he was awakened out of the stupor in which he had left his home by cries, coming from several directions:

"Shallum!"

"Long live the king!"

"Long life to Shallum!"

Shallum? Who was Shallum? Why was the name being shouted in the streets of Samaria?

Hosea, trying to find his bearings, was asking himself these questions when he arrived in the market place.

There an unusual and most unexpected sight met him. The place was filled with people. Troops were fighting in front of the royal palace. From the palace, which was brightly illuminated, soldiers and plain citizens were pouring forth in a stream. Above the shrieking of men and women and the clang of contending arms, he heard enthusiastic shouts:

"King Zechariah is dead! Long live King Shallum!"

What? Zechariah dead!

In a flash the whole situation was made clear to Hosea. Now he recalled that down at Bethel, the king's sanctuary, someone had spoken to him of a movement that was on foot to depose the king.

Hosea knew that Zechariah was unlike his great father, Jeroboam II, whom he succeeded in the year 742 B. C. E. The new king was a weakling. Upon his accession to the throne, Syria refused to pay the annual tribute, revolted, and Zechariah could not help himself. The wealth of the people, the luxury they lived in, the disorganization of the army by

corruption, the oppression of the poor, the injustices practiced in business and in the courts of law, had unfitted Israel to wage war against Syria, or any other nation, for that matter.

Zechariah, in the six months that he ruled Samaria, therefore, lost all that had been gained by his illustrious father. Hosea, however, did not look for an insurrection in Samaria.

But here it was: Zechariah was dead and Shallum —yes, Shallum, the son of Jabesh, the one mentioned to Hosea as the probable successor—had been proclaimed king. When Shallum was spoken of, down at Bethel, Hosea had paid no particular attention. He was occupied with his own family troubles then, as he was in the presence of this history-making event. The threatened revolution was the farthest thought from his mind, at that time as it was at this moment.

Therefore, before Hosea had grasped the full significance of either of the two events that had occurred that night, he was jostled into a side street by the mob that now filled the market place.

Sick at heart, Hosea did not stop to see the bloodshed and the horror, nor to listen to the story of the revolt, but walked on to the outskirts of the city.

His head swam from the excitement. His temples pounded like sledge hammers. As he walked on, his feet grew heavy and dragged. Just how he got there Hosea did not know, but suddenly he found himself in front of his own home.

The day was now dawning. The first rays of the sun were shooting their way through the early morn-

ing mist and playing on the bedewed stones of the house. Hosea entered quietly, and walked up to the children's bed room. To his amazement he found Jezreel asleep on his arms at the table.

As he gazed for a moment upon the children, Hosea's heart was wrung with sorrow. He picked Jezreel up from the chair. The boy, asleep, clung tightly about his father's neck. Hosea laid him in his bed, covered him, kissed him and, with bowed head, went to his own room.

And while little Jezreel was dreaming that a great giant came to his home, picked up the house and shook it, carried it away to a beautiful valley and brought back his mother, Hosea sat at the window and watched and watched, until the morning's duties called him.

Chapter II.

The Tragedy With a Purpose.

King Shallum soon discovered that a stolen throne is no sweeter than any other stolen thing. A palace is no more protection against conscience than a hovel; and Shallum passed miserable days of fear and nights of sleeplessness, because of his murder of Zechariah.

Smitten by his conscience and tortured in mind, Shallum was not able to collect a large force of followers to protect him or his ill-gotten throne. When, therefore, a plot was set on foot to dethrone him, Shallum was helpless.

Menahem, the son of Gadi, one of Jeroboam II's generals, organized an expedition against the usurper in Tirzah, the city that was the capital of Israel for fifty years after the Kingdom of Solomon was divided. Within a month after Shallum had proclaimed himself King of Israel, Menahem marched from Tirzah to Samaria, attacked Shallum, defeated him, and, in turn, mounted the throne of Jeroboam.

Instead of ruling peaceably in Samaria, however, Menahem started a reign of terror, until nobody in the country seemed safe in his home or in his possessions.

Trouble came for the new king thick and fast.

Tiglath-Pileser III, who had been ruling in Assyria since 745, and against whom Amos had warned the weakened Kingdom of Israel, had ac-

complished many conquests north of Israel, in Phoenicia and in the frontier lands of Damascus.

In the year 738, Tiglath-Pileser was knocking at the gates of Damascus and threatening Samaria. In order to keep the Assyrian conqueror off, and save their countries the spoliation and ruin that followed in the wake of the Assyrian armies, Menahem, together with Rezin, King of Damascus, the Kings of Tyre, Hamath, and other small states, agreed to pay him tribute.

Menahem's share was the enormous sum of one thousand talents of silver. To raise this amount, he levied a tax of fifty silver shekels each on "all the mighty men of wealth," both priests and merchants, in the kingdom.

Now, the lawlessness started by Shallum and the anarchy continued by Menahem had had their effect. The great sum of money needed for Tiglath-Pileser was raised by "all the mighty men of wealth;" but it was ground out of the poor by cheating, robbery and even murder.

The conditions against which the Prophet Amos cried out were now apparent to all observers. The final overthrow of the kingdom, which Amos declared to be but a matter of time, was now evident to all patriotic lovers of their country.

These conditions were clear as the light of day, especially to Hosea. Being a priest himself, he knew how the very priests at the sanctuaries had entered upon secret understandings with rebel associates of Menahem and the wealthy merchants to raise the Assyrian tribute at the expense of the people. Being

a lover of his fatherland, he knew that these sins and crimes against God and men must react upon the nation as a whole and rush it on to destruction.

Hosea, like Amos, therefore, felt himself called upon by God to warn his people, and, if possible, to save his country. He could no longer stand aside and see rulers, priests and "all the mighty men of wealth" despoiling his well-beloved fatherland. He must speak words of reproach and warning. He must open the eyes of his people to the calamity that was ahead of them.

One night Hosea was at home brooding over his own family troubles and thinking of the future of his country. He had just seen the children to bed and his mind was dwelling on Gomer, their mother, from whom he had not heard a single word since she went away. As he came downstairs he heard shouting and screaming and hurrying footsteps. Going into the street, he learned that another of those attacks on peaceful people had been made by a company of Menahem's followers for the purpose of robbery.

This did not surprise Hosea in the least. What did chagrin and pain him was the discovery that the attacking party was under the direction of several priests whom he knew personally.

All that night this phrase kept running through his mind—"Like people, like priest." And, strange to say, the thought of Gomer, his wife, whom he loved devotedly, whom he never ceased loving, kept on intruding itself into his thoughts about his country.

By morning, however, the whole situation had cleared up for him. Israel, its rulers and priests were like Gomer. God loved the whole people of Israel devotedly as Hosea loved Gomer, but Israel does not always understand what God desires of His people any more than Gomer understood what Hosea desired of her. If Gomer had continued loving her husband, as from the beginning, she would never have left him; if Israel had continued loving God, as from the beginning, Israel would never have strayed away from His law and commandments. What is to be done? Israel lacks knowledge of God and His will! Israel is being taught falsehoods by priests and prophets! Israel does not understand God's loving-kindness toward His people! Israel must be warned! Israel must be taught!

Hosea had determined what to do. His unhappiness at the departure of his wife was somewhat lightened now, because he read God's mission to him in the tragedy of his home. He felt himself ordained to be a preacher to Israel—and he went to work.

From that day on he traveled the wide land over, preaching to the people against the corrupt priesthood and against the usurpers of the throne of Samaria.

"Hear the word of God, ye children of Israel,
For God hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land,
For there is no truth, nor loving-kindness,
Nor knowledge of God in the land;
There is naught but perjury and lying,
Murder and stealing,
Violence and bloodshed.
Therefore doth the land mourn,
And all its inhabitants languish.

"Yet, let none bring charges,
And let none reprove,
Since my people are but as their priestlings.
My people are being destroyed for lack of knowledge.
Because thou hast rejected knowledge
I will also reject thee,
That thou shalt be no priest to me.
Since thou hast forgotten the instruction of thy God,
I will also forget thy children.
I will change their glory into shame,
And it shall be, like people, like priest.
The people that doth not understand shall be overthrown!"

Hosea, naturally, met opposition everywhere on the part of the priesthood and the hirelings of the king. Undaunted, he rebuked Menahem and the usurping rulers in Samaria, as well as the priests and the unrighteous people.

"Hear this, O ye priests!
And hearken, O house of Israel,
And give heed, O house of the king,
Since for you is the judgment.
They themselves have made kings, without my consent;
They have made princes, but without my knowledge.
For they commit falsehood;
The thief entereth in and the troop of robbers ravageth without.
And they consider not in their hearts
That I remember all their wickedness."

Then, his heart aching with pain, and remembering the sorrow of his life, which led him to prophesy, he concludes:

"What shall I do unto you, O Ephraim!
What shall I do unto you, O Israel—
Since your love is like a morning cloud,
Yea, like the dew which early goes away."

But the people as a whole, having been taught by the unworthy priests, still believed that, in

offering sacrifices, all their sins and crimes were forgiven them by God. Amos had objected strenuously to this common belief. Hosea went a step further and decried the act of sacrificing as an act of idolatry.

Referring bitterly to Bethel as Bethaven (the House of Violence) Hosea replied:

"Come not ye into Gilgal,
Neither go ye up to Beth-aven,
Nor swear, 'As God liveth.'
In Bethel I have seen a horrible thing;
All their wickedness is in Gilgal;
For there I hated them.
Because of the wickedness of their doings,
I will drive them out of my house;
I will love them no more.
They shall go with their flocks
And with their herds to seek God;
But they shall not find Him;
He hath withdrawn Himself from them."

Every place where Hosea denounced the sacrifices, the people who heard him, but could not or would not understand, called him a fool and said that he was mad. "Yes," replied Hosea:

"The prophet is a fool,
The man that hath the spirit is mad
Because of the abundance of thine iniquity.
They shall cry unto me,
'My God, we Israel know Thee.'
(But) Israel hath cast off that which is good;
Israel hath forgotten his Maker.
And now they go on sinning,
They make for themselves molten gods,
From their silver, idols according to their own model,
S ith's work, all of it!
To such they speak!
Men who sacrifice, kiss calves!
They sow the wind and shall reap the whirlwind!"

"Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercy."
—Hosea II, 21.

After that Hosea followed up his rebuke and denunciation with most pathetic entreaties:

"Sow to yourselves righteousness,
So shall ye reap loving-kindness.
Break up your fallow ground,
For it is time to seek the Lord,
That the fruit of righteousness may come upon you.
But ye have plowed wickedness,
Ye have reaped disaster,
Ye have eaten the fruit of lies.
It is love I delight in, and not sacrifice,
Knowledge of God and not burnt-offering."

When the time came for Menahem to send the tribute to Tiglath-Pileser, Hosea discovered that even here the king and his advisers were double-dealing with Assyria. The sending of the money to the great emperor was only a blind on the part of Menahem.

Secretly he was in communication with the King of Egypt, sending precious gifts to him. Menahem wanted to create an alliance between Israel and Egypt against Tiglath-Pileser.

Hosea saw the folly of it all. He knew that neither the tribute to Assyria nor the proposed alliance with Egypt could help the corrupt, degraded people. He compares Menahem's double-dealing to the action of a silly dove, and concludes:

"Samaria shall bear her guilt,
For she has rebelled against her God.
Shall I deliver them from the power of Sheol?
Shall I redeem them from death?
Come, on with thy plagues, O Death!
On with thy pestilence, O Sheol!
Repentance is forever hid from mine eyes."

This terrible pronouncement, almost a curse, brought Hosea back to his home all wrought up.

Never had he spoken so harshly. Never had he felt so deeply the doom of Israel.

He found his children in the playroom, playing an old game called "Mother." After watching them for a moment in silence and in thought, his heart was almost crushed by a question his little girl put to him:

"When is our real mother coming home?"

For answer he drew Lo-ruhamah close to his heart —and wept. Hosea did not know; only God knew.

All the love he bore for Gomer came back in an overwhelming flood. She had strayed from him, but his love had never lessened. Would that he could find her! With all her faults he would forgive her, if she would repent and return. And yet, that morning, he had been so harsh. He preached that Israel must bear its guilt and that God had forever hid repentance from before Him.

If he, a man, could love so deeply and could be willing to forgive, how much the more so does God love His people; how much the more so will God have compassion and forgive, if Israel will repent and return to Him?

And that very night it seemed that God had ordained an ordeal for Hosea to test him and inspire him in his further work as a prophet.

A message was brought to Hosea that his wife, Gomer, was to be sold as a slave at public auction, in the slave market of Samaria, on the morrow!

Chapter III.

The Repentant Returns.

With a bowed head, though with a stout heart, Hosea went to the market place on the following morning. He mingled with the people in the vicinity of the slave auction district, watching particularly a certain block, on which, he was told, Gomer was to be offered for sale.

He studied carefully every woman that was put upon the block. At last he recognized her. But how changed she seemed. Her beauty, for which she had been famous, was gone. Her straight erect form was stooped. Her eyes, once proud, were cast down. She had a forlorn, hopeless look, as if she didn't care what happened to her. Evidently she had suffered greatly.

Where had she been during the past four years? What hardships had she been through that she was so changed? Why did she fall so low that she had to be sold into slavery?

The answers to these questions would have made no difference in the plan Hosea had determined to follow with Gomer. Standing on the outskirts of the crowd, he raised bid after bid, until he bought her for "fifteen pieces of silver and a homer of barley and a half-homer of barley."

Gomer was not at all concerned about the one who had purchased her. She did not take a single glance

in the direction of those who were bidding for her. When sold, she stepped wearily down from the block and waited listlessly to be claimed by the owner and taken away.

Hosea approached her, stepped to her side and spoke her name in a low voice: "Gomer!"

She raised her eyes and looked at him as through a haze. Hosea, too, had changed much during the past four years. His love for Gomer, the uncertainty of her whereabouts, his grief, his constant preaching to Israel that fell on deaf ears, had made deep furrows in his face and brought wrinkles to his forehead.

"Come with me," he said softly to her.

For a moment Gomer stared at him; then she fell in a dead faint at his feet.

It was a long time before she revived. Sorrow and repentance for her foolishness in leaving a home where her husband loved her and where her children would have worshiped her, had she permitted them to do so, had sapped all her strength. The sudden shock of seeing Hosea and the knowledge that he had bought her as a slave nearly killed her.

But Hosea had no thought of revenge. In his great heart there was naught but love for Gomer.

On their way home Gomer began:

"I regret," she said, "I am sorry—"

But Hosea stopped her. He would not even listen to words of explanation from her whom he loved. He knew that she must have suffered much, that she was unhappy. It was sufficient now that she

was sorry, that she had repented. Hosea did not want to cause her the pain of a recital of her sorrows.

That is the way people who love truly do. They forgive and forget, quickly and without causing pain.

Hosea had the children removed to the home of a friend for several months. During that time Gomer quickly recovered from her trials and returned to health and beauty. Then he brought the children back and restored them to their real mother.

Once, after the reunited family had spent a very happy evening, a tremendous truth came home to Hosea. Here they were all happy, as if trouble had never entered to disturb the sweetness and beauty of their lives! Why had scrrow and suffering come upon them at all?

Then and there Hosea realized that there was a purpose in his home tragedy. He understood better than ever before that God had selected him to be a prophet to his people; that God had taught him through sorrow and suffering, the lesson he was to teach to Israel.

Israel had become faithless to God and had left His law; even as Gomer had left her husband. God grieved for the sins of Israel; even as he had grieved for Gomer who had strayed from him. God loved His people, nevertheless; even as he loved Gomer, continually. God was prepared to take Israel back under His guiding and loving care, when Israel would repent of its backsliding and sinning; even as he did with Gomer.

From that day on Hosea's preaching took on a different form. He no longer scolded and condemned, but entreated and pleaded with his people:

"Return, O Israel, to the Lord thy God,
For thou hast stumbled through thine iniquity.
Take words with thee
And return to God.
Say to Him,
'Pardon Thou wholly iniquity
And receive (us) with favor.
Assyria will not save us,
We will not ride upon horses (to Egypt);
We will no more say to the work of our hands,
"Ye are our god."'"

And, in the fervor of his poetic soul, the prophet hears God's answer to repenting and returning Israel:

"I will heal their backsliding,
I will love them freely,
For my anger is turned away from them.
I will be as dew to Israel;
He shall blossom as the lily
And strike his roots deep as Lebanon.
His saplings shall spread out,
And his beauty shall be as the olive tree.
They shall return and dwell in my shadow,
They shall live well-watered like a garden,
They shall flourish like a vine,
Their renown shall be like that of the wine of Lebanon."

But such hopefulness and promise of divine love had no more effect upon the doomed people than did the attacks upon their sinfulness and wrongdoing.

The Judean prophet, Amos, it will be remembered, drew a picture of God as a stern judge and Israel as the criminal. Israel is proved guilty of all the

prophet's accusations, and the Judge pronounces sentence.

The experiences that led the Samarian, Hosea, to prophesy were different than those of the Tekoan. Understanding the lasting love that dwelt within him for Gomer, and how he yearned for her return to him, he cried out to his people, from the depths of a wounded heart, speaking through the inspiration of a loving and merciful God:

"O my people!
How can I give thee up, O Ephraim!
How can I surrender thee, O Israel!
How can I give thee up as Admah!
Or make thee as Zeboim!
My heart asserts itself:
My sympathies are all aglow.
I will not carry into effect the fierceness of my anger;
I will not turn to destroy Ephraim.
For God am I, and not man,
Holy in the midst of thee;
Therefore I will not utterly consume.
Turn thou to thy God,
Keep kindness and justice,
And wait for thy God continually."

Although Hosea saw that he was laboring to no good effect, he did not for an instant give up. Time and again he recalled the early days of love and devotion between God and Israel. He recounted the times when Israel deserted God, from the Exodus on, but God always received Israel back, when the people repented of their sins and returned to acts of justice, righteousness and love.

"I am the Lord, thy God, from the land of Egypt;
Thou knowest no God but Me,
And besides Me there is no Savior."

Hosea could not conceive the idea that God would desert Israel forever. He recognized, however, that the doom of the sinful nation was sealed. And so he read the drama of Israel in his own life. Assyria would destroy Samaria. Israel would leave the fatherland as Gomer left her home. In exile Israel would learn through suffering and hardships as Gomer had done. Israel would redeem itself and, eventually, would return to God. God, loving Israel always, would wait to receive His repentant people, as he himself had received Gomer.

And so Hosea drew a beautiful picture of that future day in these words:

"And I will betroth thee unto me forever.
Yea, I will betroth thee unto me with righteousness,
And with justice and with loving-kindness and in mercy;
Yea, I will betroth thee unto me with faithfulness,
And thou shalt know God."

The compiler of the fragments of Hosea's speeches in the book bearing the prophet's name—the most fragmentary book in the Bible, and from which this story has been built up—concludes his labors with this admonition:

"Whoso is wise, let him understand these things;
Whoso is prudent, let him realize them;
For straight are the ways of the Lord.
The righteous walk in them,
But transgressors stumble upon them."

The Statesman Prophet

The Statesman Prophet

Chapter I.

The Vision in the Temple.

Even his closest friends could not explain what had come over young Isaiah, since the physicians announced that King Uzziah was nearing his end.

Amoz, Isaiah's father, was of a noble family, very near the throne in Jerusalem, and a dear personal friend of the king. Isaiah, too, was a prime favorite of Uzziah's, not by virtue of his father's friendship for the king, but because of his own fine qualities and excellent disposition.

Often Isaiah had been invited, with the Crown Prince, Jotham, to be present at the Great Councils of State—a very distinguished honor for so young a man. But no one thought, for an instant, that this change in manner and behavior, so noticeable to everyone, had come upon Isaiah because of his grief over the aged king's fatal illness.

Isaiah was being trained to enter upon a political career. His politics was the only serious thing in life for him. The country was so peaceful and prosperous, however, that even politics was a matter of little consequence to most of the royalty in Jerusalem. They lived the joyous life, paid little atten-

tion to the Temple and its priests, and often laughed at the whole religious ritual. But when great State functions occurred at the Palace or foreign ambassadors appeared at Court, all royalty celebrated with feasting—and Isaiah was among those present and in high favor.

He always came to these occasions in rare good humor and with cheerful enthusiasm. He was a young man of many accomplishments. His knowledge of affairs was wide and extensive. His cleverness and wit had made him famed far and wide. His occasional poems, written for sport and festivals, showed a genuine talent, almost a genius, for the poetic art. He was considered by all the very life and spirit of the younger Court set. A great future as a statesman and man of letters was predicted for him by everybody.

Now, however, since King Uzziah became so critically ill that his life was despaired of, this unexplainable change took place in Isaiah. He seemed to have quarreled with Prince Jotham, who had been reigning as king since Uzziah was smitten beyond hope of recovery, though both laughed at the rumor and denied it.

What proved the greatest surprise to all, was the fact that Isaiah often went to the Temple and talked earnestly with the priests. At times he would linger about the place long after the evening sacrifices had been offered and the priests had gone home. His jolly friends would make sport of him; but his more

sober-minded companions became quite alarmed when, instead of displaying his usual good humor, he spoke with bitter sarcasm. His contagious laugh began to ring forced and hollow. He was morose and always ill at ease, as if he were laboring under a great strain that burdened his heart and mind.

King Uzziah's death was a lingering one. For many weeks reports from the sick chamber were to the effect that he was passing away, but he clung to life. Jerusalem had doffed its gala attire and the whole of Judah was prepared to go into mourning for its king. For a month or more the nobility and the Court had not indulged in any social functions, state or private. The Capital and the country were awaiting the royal funeral.

Uzziah had been a great king and a good ruler. He had done much for the whole country, and especially for the Capital. The mourning in Jerusalem and all through Judah was, therefore, genuine and sincere, when the king died. The pomp and ceremony that characterized the funeral procession were not mere royal show, but expressions of honor and deep regret of a loyal people for its beloved sovereign.

The young Isaiah was accorded an honored place in the long list of notables who followed the body of the king to its last resting place. He walked beside Jotham, his bosom friend; but did not accompany the new king on the return to the palace. In the slight confusion that followed after Uzziah had been

"buried with his fathers," Isaiah slipped quietly away and took the road to the Temple Mount.

Taking his way through the Water Gate, on the west side of the Temple, he entered the Inner Court. Then he mounted the twelve steps leading to the vestibule of the Temple proper. Two priests, who had just come out of the chamber where the implements for sacrificing were kept, bowed low to him and passed out into the Inner Court. Isaiah was evidently so absorbed in his thoughts that he did not notice them, for he did not return their salute, but walked forward to the entrance of the Hekal, or Temple proper.

There he stood for a moment in silence; then he leaned wearily against one of the entrance pillars. Behind him the Priests' Hall and the Inner Court were deserted. Before him, in the Hekal, was the Altar of Incense, on which coals from the recent sacrifices were still alive. To the right of the Altar was the Menorah, the seven-light candlestick, and to the left the table of showbread. Behind these hung the golden curtains that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple.

A thin line of blue and purple smoke rose from the live coals on the Incense Altar and wound its way upward to the ceiling of the Hekal. As Isaiah watched the rising smoke, it became thicker and thicker, and filled the whole Temple. His eyes gazed from the Altar to the glittering gold curtains behind it. The reflection from the coals, and the playing

of the blue and purple smoke on the golden sheets, caused them to sheen and shimmer until they faded entirely away into the blue and purple maze that filled the Hèkal.

Isaiah was gazing right into the Holy of Holies, where no human eyes, except those of the High Priest, once a year, ever looked, and behold! he saw a most remarkable vision.

There, instead of the wooden Ark of the Covenant, he beheld a great and lofty throne on which was God, Himself. Instead of the two Cherubim of wood and gold, that surmounted the Ark, he beheld Seraphim, the fiery Angels, standing attendant before Him. Each of the Seraphim had six wings, with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet and with two he flew. And one cried unto another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts,
The whole earth is full of His glory."

Isaiah felt the very foundations of the threshold shake under him, at the sound of the calling. Covering his face with both hands, he cried out:

"Woe is me!
I am undone.
For I am a man of unclean lips.
And I am dwelling among a people of unclean lips;
Yet mine eyes have seen the King, the God of hosts."

Uncovering his face, he stretched out his hands towards the throne in mute appeal. Thereupon one of the Seraphim flew to the Altar and, with a pair

of tongs, took from it a live coal. From the Altar the Seraph flew directly to Isaiah and, touching his mouth with the live coal, said:

"See, this has touched thy lips,
Therefore thine iniquity is gone
And thy sin forgiven."

Then Isaiah heard the voice of God Himself, saying:

"Whom shall I send,
And who will go for us?"

Falling to his knees, and again stretching out his hands towards the throne, Isaiah answered:

"Here am I!
Send me!"

Kneeling there, motionless, hardly breathing, his lips apart, his face expressing the fear and anguish that were in his heart, Isaiah heard the reply:

"Go and say to this people:
Hear and hear again, but understand not;
See and see again, but perceive not.
Make fat the heart of this people,
And their ears dull, and besmear their eyes,
Lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears,
And their heart should understand and they be healed."

The force of this message struck Isaiah to the heart. He understood its meaning very well. It was terrible! It carried with it the sound of doom and the end of his nation. The very thought of it terrified him. Holding his head with both hands, his back bent forward as under a heavy weight, until

"Here I am, send me."—Isaiah VI, 8.

his face touched his knees upon the floor, he cried in heartbreaking tones:

"Lord! How long?"

And God answered him:

"Until the cities are in ruin without an inhabitant,
And the houses without a human occupant,
And the land become utterly desolate,
And God hath sent the men far away,
And in the midst of the land the deserted territory be great.
And should there be a tenth in it,
It must in turn be fuel for flame,
Like the terebinth and the oak,
Of which, after falling, but a stump remains."

For a long time after the voice had ceased speaking, Isaiah remained in the position in which he had listened to the last reply.

When, finally, in fear and trembling, he slowly raised his head, the vision had gone! Behind him the Priests' Hall and the Inner Court were deserted. Before him a thin line of blue and purple smoke rose from the live coals on the Incense Altar and wound its way upward to the ceiling of the Hekal.

Isaiah passed his hands over his eyes. For a moment he let his cool palm rest against his burning forehead. Then he slowly found his way out of the Temple and passed out into the silent night.

Chapter II.

The Parable of the Vineyard.

The fact was that Isaiah did not grieve particularly over King Uzziah's illness and approaching death. What troubled him was the attitude taken by his dear friend, the Crown Prince, Jotham, toward the political future of the Kingdom of Judah, since his sick father had placed the reins of government in his hands.

The differences of opinion between Isaiah and Jotham, as to what was best for the nation were so great as to be almost hopeless. So that, even before Uzziah died the two stopped discussing problems of State, although they continued their warm friendship.

As long as King Uzziah lived, it was plain, nothing serious could happen to the country. To the south, Uzziah was feared by the Philistines and Arabians, whom he had subdued, and his name was honored even at the Court of Egypt. To the north, Jeroboam II. was prosperous and at peace; Syria was weak and Assyria had not yet made its power felt. Within the extended borders of his own country, Uzziah had established peace and had built up commercial enterprise and prosperity.

To the average citizen of Judah, therefore, the country was all right, the king was all right, and the

future had not the slightest cloud before it. To Isaiah, the keen-sighted and well-posted young statesman, however, neither the country nor the king was fit to deal with a great national crisis—and the future had one in store.

When Uzziah became sick and abdicated, quietly, in favor of Jotham, then a young man of twenty-five, Isaiah began to call Jotham's attention to the internal social conditions of the country; but Jotham had such a high respect for his father's ruling power that he would not alter a single law nor make a single reform.

When Isaiah attempted to drum into Jotham's head the causes of the reign of anarchy in Samaria and the lessons to be drawn therefrom for Judah, Jotham, desiring to show his power as a ruler while his father was yet alive, busied himself fighting with the Ammonites and extending the boundaries of his kingdom.

When, finally, in the year 738 B. C. E., the news came to Jerusalem that King Menahem, of Israel, had sent a heavy tribute to the Assyrian Tiglath-Pileser, Isaiah's worries over the future of his own country became very acute.

It was in this year Uzziah died; and it was on the day of the king's funeral that Isaiah saw the remarkable vision in the Temple.

Up to that hour Isaiah was conscious only of the fact that something must be done in Judah to save it from the evils of injustice and unrighteousness

that were being practiced by the rich and powerful upon the poor and weak. From that hour on he knew that God had called him to be His prophet, that God had selected him to bring the truth home to the Judeans and, if possible, to save the nation from the doom that awaited the sister-nation, Israel.

What Isaiah saw and heard in the Temple at the close of that memorable day, gave him the germ of an idea as to what God demanded of him to do. Time, thought and experience ripened that idea into a plan. The course of events offered him the opportunity to put the plan into action.

Isaiah could not count on Jotham to institute and carry out reforms in the religious beliefs and practices of the people, in their commercial wrongdoings, in the corrupt law courts and in the general oppression of the lower classes. He had to begin work on his own initiative; and he began it with the people themselves, in the City of Jerusalem.

He came to the Temple Mount one day, when many pilgrims were gathered there. He listened attentively, with the rest, to travelers from Arabia, who were relating wonderful tales of adventure. From stories of adventure in foreign lands the pilgrims drifted into stories of happenings in their own country. Some related rumors of what was going on in Samaria; others spoke of the possibility of Judah's being forced to fight Assyria some day. Some laughed at such a suggestion; others were in grave doubt whether such an emergency would find

the nation prepared. Some spoke of the evils that were sapping the strength of the people; others complained that the king, instead of attending to his business of State, was busying himself with his wealth of herds and vineyards.

Here Isaiah, who had been silently listening to the discussions, offered to recite a poem, an original composition. The suggestion was received with loud applause and Isaiah began:

"Let me sing a song of my friend,
My friend's song about his vineyard."

At this introduction everybody settled down comfortably to listen, and Isaiah continued:

"My friend hath a vineyard
On a fertile hill;
He digged it and gathered out the stones,
And planted it with choicest vine;
A tower he built in the midst of it
And hewed out a wine press.
He looked to find grapes that were good,
And it yielded only wild grapes."

Isaiah's listeners were disappointed. The story not only lacked excitement, it even lacked interest. They shifted in their places uneasily, but Isaiah caught their attention again by continuing:

"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem,
And ye people of Judah.
Judge, I pray you, betwixt me
And betwixt my vineyard.
What more could be done to my vineyard
Than that which I have done?
When I looked to find grapes that were good
Why yielded it wild grapes?

"And now, pray, I will tell you
What I will do to my vineyard:
I will take away the hedge thereof,
That it shall be devoured;
I will break down the wall thereof,
That it shall be trodden down;
Yea, I will make a waste thereof,
That it shall not be pruned or weeded.
Then it shall put forth thorns and thickets of brambles;
The clouds I will command that they rain not thereon."

Everybody understood now that Isaiah was speaking a parable and that its application was to them and to their country. But who was the "friend" who possessed this vineyard? Isaiah did not hold the questioners in long suspense:

"For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the House of Israel,
And the men of Judah are His cherished plant;
And he looked for justice, but, behold! bloodshed;
For righteousness, but, behold! a cry of distress."

Then Isaiah launched forth into a powerful denunciation of the social evils of which Judah and the leading Judeans were guilty—a sixfold woe that was rushing the Nation on to destruction.

"Woe unto them that join house to house,
Who add field to field,
Until there is no space left,
And they dwell alone in the midst of the land.

"Woe unto them that rise at dawn
To pursue strong drink,
Who tarry late into the night
Until wine inflames them;
But they regard not the work of the lord
And see not what His hands have made

"Woe unto them that draw guilt upon themselves
With cords of folly,
And sin as with a cart rope!

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil;
That put darkness for light, and light for darkness;
That put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

"Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes,
And prudent in their own conceit!

"Woe unto them that are heroic in drinking wine,
And valiant in mixing strong drink!
Who, for a bribe, justify the wicked
And strip the innocent man of his inocence!

"Therefore, as the fire devours stubble,
And as hay shrivels in a flame,
So their root shall be as rottenness
And their blossom go up as dust;
Because they have rejected the teaching of the Lord of hosts,
And despised the word of Israel's Holy One."

So intensely absorbed in his speech was Isaiah, and so deeply interested was the vast assembly whom he was addressing, that no one took note of a splendidly arrayed group of men who had come up and stood with the rest, listening.

When Isaiah had finished speaking, and the people had caught their breath again, some one shouted:

"Behold! The king!"

Isaiah looked over the heads of the crowd toward the newcomers, and there he beheld Jotham and a retinue of nobles, laughing heartily, no doubt, at his masterful effort.

Fearlessly, and without a moment's hesitation, the prophet did what he had threatened Jotham he would

do—he denounced his friend, the king, before his people:

"The Lord standeth forth to present his case,
And He standeth up to judge His people.
The Lord entereth into judgment
With the elders of His people and their princes.
'Ye, yourselves, have devoured the vineyard.
The spoils of the needy are in your houses.
What do you mean by crushing my people
And by grinding the face of the needy?'
Saith the Lord, God of hosts."

Laughing still more heartily at this madness of his old friend, Jotham easily made his way to where the prophet stood. He placed his arm around Isaiah's shoulder and invited him to go with him and his companions to the palace.

Isaiah did as he was bidden. All the way Jotham and his friends made fun of the feverish enthusiasm with which the denunciations were delivered, but Isaiah did not feel hurt. His heart was quite at peace. At last he had launched forth upon the work to which God had so unexpectedly and so marvelously called him!

When Jotham and his friends arrived at the palace, a joint embassy from Rezin, the king of Syria, and from Pekah, the king of Israel, was awaiting them. To the amazement of them all, the ambassadors placed before Jotham a demand that Judah join forces with Syria and Israel, forthwith, and fight Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria, who was then threatening to invade Damascus and Samaria!

Chapter III.

A Coward on the Throne.

King Jotham was wise enough to follow the advice of the Prophet Isaiah in his reply to the embassy from Rezin and Pekah. At the Council of State, called to consider the message from the kings of Syria and Israel, Isaiah counselled an unhesitating and decisive refusal of their demand. While, therefore, the ambassadors were received and entertained royally in Jerusalem, they returned to their respective sovereigns, their mission unaccomplished.

The answer that Jotham sent back to Damascus and Samaria was plain, simple and to the point. Judah, he said, had no interest in the political policies and intrigues of Syria and Israel and would not join a coalition against Assyria.

Both Rezin and Pekah stormed against Jotham and his advisors, but to no avail. Judah was strong, independent and at peace, and Jotham would not involve his country in a quarrel with which he had nothing to do.

Conditions in Israel were different, however. The majority of the people chafed under the indignity of being tributary to Assyria. They hated King Menahem who, in his fear, sent the tribute to Tiglath-Pileser and became his voluntary subject.

Menahem was hated by the rich merchants and large landowners as well as by the people generally, because on them the burden of the tribute fell the heaviest. The powerful Samarians, therefore, formed themselves into a party to oppose the king.

King Rezin, of Syria, who was watching his opportunity to rebel against Assyria, kept alive this hostile spirit against Menahem in Samaria and Israel. Rezin was working toward a coalition of all the countries along the Mediterranean sea that were tributary to Tiglath-Pileser, so that in their combined strength they might rise and throw off the Assyrian yoke.

The leaders of the opposition to the king,—the national patriots—in Samaria, hoped that Pekaiah, Menahem's son and successor, would prove himself a truer son of his country than his father. They looked to him to refuse the payment of the Assyrian tribute and to re-establish the independence of the Kingdom of Israel; but they were disappointed. Pekaiah followed in the political footsteps of his father and the hopes of the Samarian patriots waned when he succeeded his father on the throne.

Rezin, however, was not to be denied in the plans he had laid out for himself and for the other Assyrian tributaries. Pekaiah reigned in Samaria less than two years, when, in 735, through the assistance of Rezin and the connivance of the patriotic party in Samaria, he was assassinated by one of his generals, Pekah, the son of Remaliah.

Pekah was thus raised to the throne of Israel with the avowed purpose of uniting with Rezin in the proposed rebellion against Tiglath-Pileser. Israel wanted, and needed, the help of Judah in the desperate conflict that awaited them. The smaller countries north of Israel and Syria, crushed under the burden of their Assyrian tribute, gladly joined the Syro-Israelitish coalition; but the embassy to Jerusalem returned empty-handed. Rezin and Pekah, however, were not dismayed by the refusal of Judah to join them. They bided their time for a better opportunity.

This opportunity came the very next year when Jotham died, suddenly, and his son, Ahaz, a young man of twenty, came to the throne of Judah.

Without any notice whatever, Rezin and Pekah united their armed forces and marched upon Jerusalem. This sudden invasion of Judah had been carefully planned beforehand. It was so arranged that, when the Syro-Israelitish forces attacked Jerusalem, a certain man, the son of Tabeal, who was willing to play the traitor, was to assassinate Ahaz, proclaim himself king, admit the enemy into the city and throw all the power and wealth of Judah into the scale with Syria and Israel in the war against Tiglath-Pileser.

Ahaz was entirely unprepared for such a move on the part of Pekah and Rezin. The news that the two armies were on the march caused consternation,

not alone in the palace of the king, but in Jerusalem and in the entire country.

The northern part of Judah, as far as Jerusalem, was unprotected and at the mercy of the enemy. Neither Uzziah nor Jotham looked for a foe from that direction. In fact, the Syro-Israelitish forces met no opposition whatever until they came within sight of Jerusalem.

The very first thing that Ahaz and his generals did, when they had recovered from their consternation, was to prepare the capital for a siege. The fortifications were examined and strengthened. The water supply to the south of the city, without which Jerusalem could not have withstood a siege for three months, was especially looked after.

Now, Ahaz was like that ancient Pharaoh who did not know Joseph, or like his own predecessor, Rehoboam, who "took council with the young men that were grown up with him." Ahaz did not call Isaiah, the old friend and counsellor of the royal house, to advise him in his great extremity.

Isaiah, however, called to God to save his nation—if the nation would be saved—and did not wait for an invitation from the young king. While Ahaz, his advisors and the commanders of his army, were examining the water supply of Jerusalem, preparatory to the inevitable siege, Isaiah went out to meet him. The prophet came upon the royal party at the end of the conduit of the upper reservoir, in the highway of the Fuller's field.

Isaiah, who had been quietly and carefully studying the entire situation since the embassy came to Jotham, understood well enough that an intrigue must be brewing in Jerusalem against the young King. When the report reached the city that the enemy was on the march, Isaiah's searching inquiries and careful observation of the leaders of the capital resulted in the discovery that the son of Tabeal was in league with Rezin and Pekah. It was Isaiah at this meeting, who informed Ahaz that his immediate danger was as much within his own city as from the enemy that was approaching. No wonder, then, that "his heart trembled, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest tremble with the wind."

But Isaiah immediately reassured the trembling Ahaz in the following words:

"Take heed and keep thyself calm; fear not, neither be faint-hearted because of these two fag ends of smoking firebrands, because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and of the son of Remaliah. Syria, with Israel, hath purposed evil against thee, saying, 'Let us go up against Judah and distress it and overpower it and appoint the son of Tabeal king in its midst.' But thus saith the Lord God: It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass, for, the head of Syria is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin, and the head of Israel is Samaria and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. Verily, if you will not hold fast, ye shall not stand fast."

Ahaz laughed at the idea of keeping quiet and having no fear, under the conditions. He turned away impatiently from the prophet and proceeded with his business of examining the reservoir. Isaiah, however, would not be put off with mere impatience.

"Ask thee a sign of the Lord, thy God," he cried to Ahaz. "Ask it either in the depths of Sheol or in the heights above."

But Ahaz replied, "I will not ask, neither will I put the Lord to the test."

Then Isaiah said:

"Hear now, O House of David! Is it too small a thing for you to weary men, that ye must also weary my God? Therefore the Lord, Himself, will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman will bear a son and call his name Immanuel (God is with us). Before this child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good those two kings before whom thou tremblest shall be deserted."

Ahaz was tired of mere words. Advice he had enough; he wanted now to act. In fact, when the knowledge of the political intrigue in Jerusalem became known to him, he immediately made up his mind what to do. He, therefore, again turned from Isaiah and ordered his retinue to continue the examination of the water supply.

Isaiah then tried another form of argument with this cowardly young king, in order to bring him to his senses. He, himself, was positive that Tiglath-Pileser, who was at that time in Asia Minor, had, no doubt, been informed by his spies of the action taken by Rezin and Pekah. Isaiah felt sure, also, that Tiglath-Pileser would immediately invade Syria. He knew, in addition, that neither Rezin nor Pekah was strong and powerful enough, at this time, to wage a protracted war with Assyria; that is why he described them as "two fag ends of smoking fire-

brands." He, therefore, concluded that, at the first information of Tiglath-Pileser's march into the northern country, Rezin and Pekah would have to return to defend their own lands.

On the other hand, Isaiah knew that, if Ahaz did anything that would in any way displease the mighty King of Assyria, the latter would, after finishing his campaign in Syria and Israel, attack Judah. Therefore, he warned Ahaz in these words:

"God will bring upon thee and upon thy people and upon thy father's house days such as have not been since the day Ephraim departed from Judah, through the King of Assyria. Curds and honey will be that child's food (in the wilderness) when he knows to refuse evil and choose the good."

Isaiah ceased. He had delivered his message, had counseled and warned the king. He made it clear to Ahaz that, if he did anything except trust in the power and care of God for his people, Judah, like Syria and Israel, was destined to become a wilderness in the short time that it takes a child to reach that age when it can begin to think for itself.

Ahaz, however, acted upon his own and his young men's counsel. Hardly had he returned to the palace that day, when he sent messengers carrying the following letter to Tiglath-Pileser, King of Assyria:

"I am your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the power of the King of Assyria and from the power of the King of Israel, who have attacked me."

Ahaz followed up this message by ransacking the Temple in Jerusalem and the treasures of the royal

palace, sending both as a gift and bribe to Tiglath-Pileser.

Then exactly what Isaiah foresaw happened. Tiglath-Pileser immediately invaded Syria and attacked Damascus. Rezin and Pekah were forced to hurry back to defend their own countries, and Judah was saved from Syro-Israelitish attack; but Ahaz had already thrown himself at the feet of the great Assyrian conqueror, with terrible results to his own country.

Chapter IV.

On Deaf Ears.

Though the spineless Ahaz sent his cowardly note, and the presents that followed, to Tiglath-Pileser secretly, the truth leaked out. Great indignation was aroused among certain opponents of the king in Jerusalem at the discovery of his act of treachery to the nation, and a new party was formed to fight against submission to Assyria.

The aim of the new movement was, principally, to preserve the independence of Judah. The only avenue open seemed to be the alliance with Israel and Syria that the lamented king, Jotham, would not enter into.

With Ahaz looked upon as a traitor, the only one to whom these patriots could turn, was the Prophet Isaiah, who loved his land and knew its traditions. So, the leaders of the patriotic party came to him with their plans. But Isaiah stood firm in the position he had taken with Jotham against entangling alliances.

He shocked these gentlemen with a well-spoken rebuke. He told them that the patriotism Judah needed was not of alliances and war, but of faith in God, of trust in Him who always guards and protects a righteous nation against its enemies.

Isaiah knew well enough the weakened and helpless condition of both Israel and Syria. To join

with them in a war against Tiglath-Pileser would mean even greater ruin for Judah than the peaceful submission of Ahaz. He pictured the results of such an alliance in the following words:

"Because this people have rejected the waters of Shiloah
that flow softly,
And rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son,
Therefore the Lord is about to bring upon them
The waters of the River Euphrates, mighty and great
(Even the King of Assyria, in all his glory).
And it shall rise above all its channels,
And overflow all its banks;
And it shall sweep onward into Judah,
And it shall overflow and pass over it,
Reaching even to its neck,
And its outstretched wings shall cover the breadth of
thy land, O Immanuel."

To the king, the prophet sent a concise message that would have been heeded and understood by any one but a weakling like Ahaz. Isaiah referred to the utter helplessness into which Ahaz had cast Judah by his cowardly self-subjugation to Tiglath-Pileser. He pictured what might happen when that mighty monarch would receive the king's pitiful cry for help:

"In that same day the Lord will shave with the razor hired beyond the Euphrates the head and the hidden hair; and it shall even sweep away the beard."

Despite Isaiah's efforts, the peace party that stood by Ahaz, and the war party that desired an alliance with Pekah and Rezin, continued their separate agitations.

The capture of the town of Elath, at the head of the Arabian Gulf, by a detachment of the Syrian army, strengthened Ahaz in his belief that help could come only from Tiglath-Pileser. On the other hand, it convinced the war party that only the union with Samaria and Damascus could restore to the country this center of Judah's lucrative trade, that commanded the commerce to the south.

Isaiah recognized the uselessness of appealing to either of these opposing parties. He determined to appeal to the country at large, to the whole people, who were interested not in party quarrels, but in the welfare of the nation. He wanted to create a public opinion in favor of peace and in opposition to entangling alliances, either with Assyria or with the Palestinian coalition.

On his own property, in the heart of Jerusalem, where all the passers-by could see and read it, Isaiah erected a great sign which read:

"SWIFT BOOTY—SPEEDY PREY."

He meant this to indicate to the people that the triumphs of either the champions of peace or the champions of war would mean ruin to the nation at the hands of Assyria.

About this time a son was born to Isaiah. He gave a magnificent feast to the leading people of Jerusalem and, to bring his conviction home more forcibly, named the boy "Swift Booty—Speedy Prey."

At the close of the feast he addressed his guests and said, in part:

"Before the boy knows how to cry, 'My mother' and 'My father,' they shall carry off the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria before the King of Assyria."

At a great meeting in Jerusalem, soon thereafter, Isaiah again took up the burden of his argument against Israel and Syria. He predicted the inevitable destruction of these two kingdoms, because they were in rebellion against Assyria, and he pointed out the consequent foolhardiness of involving Judah in the oncoming disaster. Regarding Israel he said:

"In that day the glory of Jacob shall grow dim,
And the fatness of his flesh wax lean.
And it shall be as when a harvester gathers standing grain,
And his arms reap the ears;
Yea, it shall be as when he gleans in the valley of Rephaim,
And the gleanings thereof shall be as the beating of an olive tree—
Two or three berries on the topmost branch,
Four or five on the boughs of a fruit tree,
Saith the Lord, the God of Israel."

Then, addressing himself as if he were speaking to the people of Israel, but hoping to drive the lesson home to the people of Judah, who were listening to him, he spoke most regretfully:

"For thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation
And hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength."

Turning to a consideration of the second of the allies, Syria, Isaiah continued:

"Soon shall Damascus cease to be a city
And shall be a ruinous heap.
Its cities shall be given up to flocks
Which shall lie down, with none to make them afraid.
Ephraim shall lose her bulwark,
And Damascus her sovereignty,
And the rest of Syria shall perish;
Like the Israelites shall they be,
Saith the Lord of Hosts."

These descriptions of what would happen to Syria and Israel, however, did not go unchallenged. The prophet was told that he had evidently forgotten that all the nations in Palestine and along the Mediterranean, except Judah, were parties to this coalition against Tiglath-Pileser. Isaiah laughed. With fine scorn he cried:

"Ah! The multitude of many peoples
That roar like the roaring of the seas!
And the rushing of nations,
That rush like the rushing of many waters!
But he shall rebuke them and they shall flee far off,
And shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before
the wind.
And like the whirling dust before the storm.
At eventide, behold, terror;
Before the morning, they are no more."

Then, as if addressing himself to all the petty northern countries that were trying to drag his own beloved fatherland into the whirlpool of disaster, Isaiah spoke as follows:

"Make an uproar, O ye people,
And be broken in pieces;
And give ear, all ye of far countries;
Gird yourselves and be broken in pieces,
Take counsel together, and it shall be brought to naught;
Speak the word and it shall not stand;
For God is with us."

And in answer to the appeal of the people as to what ought to be done in this national crisis, Isaiah replied:

"Call ye not conspiracy all that this people calleth conspiracy.
What they fear do not fear, nor be filled with dread.
The Lord of Hosts, Him regard as the conspirator!
Let Him be your fear and your dread!"

Chapter V.

The Survival of the Fittest.

While Isaiah was thus attempting to influence the two parties in Jerusalem, exactly what he had warned Ahaz of happened. The Assyrian forces made a speedy march into Syria, with Damascus as the point of attack. The combined Syro-Israelitish army, upon hearing of Tilgath-Pileser's new move, abandoned the siege of Jerusalem and hurried back to defend their own countries.

The great Assyrian conqueror easily subdued all the land about Damascus and finally besieged the city itself. Rezin offered him desperate resistance, but it was useless. Tiglath-Pileser destroyed all the forests, fruit groves and fertile fields in the vicinity of the city, until both food and water failed the defenders.

In a last sally from the doomed city, the Syrian troops were literally cut to pieces. Rezin escaped with his life, and, disguised and alone, re-entered Damascus. But he was caught, brought before Tiglath-Pileser and put to death.

In the meantime, all Israel and Samaria quaked at the fate that awaited them. Pekah, who had been lending Rezin what help he could, without entirely weakening himself, was ready and willing to give the Assyrian battle. Tiglath-Pileser, however, had his

hands full with Damascus. He therefore, welcomed the suggestion of a certain Hoshea, son of Elah, of Samaria, who offered to follow the example of the traitor Menahem.

Tiglath-Pileser assented gladly. He promised help and protection to Hoshea, as he did to Ahaz, for voluntary submission to Assyrian rule. So Hoshea conspired against Pekah in Samaria, slew him, proclaimed himself king under the protection of Assyria, and sent tribute to Tiglath-Pileser at Damascus. Cowardice and treachery thus once more sealed the fate of the kingdom of Israel.

After the fall of Damascus, the victorious Assyrian ordered a great *Durbar* to celebrate his victory in that city. All the tributary kings in Palestine were commanded to meet him and pay homage to him there.

The splendor and display of the gathering was rivaled only by the magnificence of the welcome the terrible monarch received on his return to Asshur, his own capital.

Among the princes who hob-nobbed with their master at Damascus were the cowardly Ahaz and the traitorous Hoshea. But both were happy in that their countries escaped the awful havoc they witnessed in Damascus and throughout Syria.

Tiglath-Pileser always carried with him a wonderfully wrought altar on which he offered sacrifices to Asshur, the Assyrian god. During the religious exercises at the Damascus festival, in which all the Assyrian vassals participated, Ahaz was particularly

struck with the beauty of this altar. Thereupon he sent to Urijah, the high priest in Jerusalem, "the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof," with instructions to have it duplicated for the Temple in Jerusalem. tions to have it duplicated for the Temple in Jerusa-

Isaiah, when he heard of this, was thunderstruck by the audacity of the king who had no respect for his people or for his God.

Not only was this heathen altar built, but it replaced the ancient one, which was set aside. Ahaz even went further. When he returned from Damascus, he himself, instead of the regularly appointed priest, offered the sacrifices upon the new altar, as he had seen Tiglath-Pileser do. To cap the climax, Ahaz introduced certain pagan religious ideas, copied from the Assyrian worship, into the cult of the Temple, simply to please and gratify his Assyrian master.

With so base a king, Isaiah could hope nothing for the nation. Truly could he cry out in the anguish of his spirit:

> "My people—a boy is their leader!"
> "My people—thy guides lead thee astray."

Of one thing, however, Isaiah was positive. When messengers came to him from various parts of the country to inquire what to do in this national crisis he answered them all alike: "God hath founded Zion, and in her shall the afflicted of His people take refuge."

He was certain that neither a weakling like Ahaz nor a terror like Tiglath-Pileser could bring destruction upon the city that God had selected as the center of His worship, or upon the people whom God had chosen, to reveal Himself to them and to entrust them with His law.

The patriotic and religious backsliding of Ahaz and his counselors, however, seemed to point to the destruction of both. But Isaiah was not dismayed. Trusting faithfully in God's protecting hand over His people, he could not conceive that God would desert them for long. God would not permit a backboneless king to reign over His people. The successor to Ahaz would be a different type of man —an ideal prince in the sight of God and men:

"And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse,
And a branch of his roots shall bear fruit.
And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and might,
The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.
And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes,
Neither arbitrate after the hearing of his ears;
But with righteousness shall he judge the poor,
And arbitrate with equity for the afflicted of the land:
And he shall smite the tyrannous with the rod of his mouth,
And with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked,
And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins,
And faithfulness the girdle of his reins,
And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
The calf and the young lion shall feed together;
And a little child shall lead them.
And the cow and the bear shall make friends;
Their young ones shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp,

And the weaned child shall stretch out his hand to the serpent's eye.
None shall do evil or act corruptly in all my holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

In all literature there is no more beautiful and meaningful description of what an ideal ruler should be and of the peaceful and happy state to which such a ruler could bring his country.

But Isaiah did not lose sight of the fact that just as little as an Ahaz could accomplish the destruction of the nation, so little could an ideal king, even if his fond dream would come true, accomplish the reconstruction of the nation, single-handed and alone.

What was necessary, therefore, was the raising and educating of a new generation of citizens in Judah; a just, patriotic, God-fearing company of men who, when the hoped-for king shall have come to the throne, would support him, with their valor and their lives, in building up the entire nation to walk in God's way.

So Isaiah began quietly with his own family first, and later with a few friends and disciples who believed as he did. "Binding up the admonition and sealing the instruction among my disciples," said Isaiah, "I will wait for the Lord who is hiding His face from the House of Jacob, and in Him will I trust. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord of Hosts who dwells in Mount Zion."

Isaiah's idea was similar to that of Moses in the olden days in the wilderness. The present generation, ruler and people, that did not place its trust wholly in God, would slowly die out; a new generation, better and more fit, would survive to save the nation.

Just at this time, when Isaiah began his slow work of upbuilding the nation, a son and heir was born to the king. Isaiah accepted this incident as a message of approval of his course from God. He and his disciples looked to this prince to be the ideal king; and in celebration of the event Isaiah greeted the heir apparent in the following fine outburst of hope for the future:

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given;
And the government shall be upon his shoulder;
And his name shall be called wonder-counselor,
Divine hero, father of glory, prince of peace.
For the increase of dominion and for peace without end,
Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom,
To establish and support it by justice and by righteousness
From henceforth, even forever; the favor of the Lord of Hosts will perform this."

Chapter VI.

Working With the Remnant.

Isaiah called his little band of disciples and followers "The Remnant." He referred to them as "The Remnant" because he knew that, if only these remained true and faithful to God, for their sakes God would not forsake the Fatherland.

It was upon "The Remnant" that he placed the future welfare of his country. Through these few he hoped to regenerate the rest of his people, despite the corruption and wrongdoing of their leaders. He aimed, especially, to prepare the young generation for patriotic, God-fearing, God-trusting lives.

The prophet had set for himself no easy task. He met opposition from many directions. The king himself opposed him for political reasons. The priests, who sided with the king in his introduction of Assyrian rites and practices in the Temple service, opposed him on religious grounds; so that, for many years, Isaiah simply devoted himself to teaching and preaching moral living, just and righteous dealing and absolute trust in God.

'Hear, O heavens, and give heed, O earth, for the Lord speaketh:
Sons have I brought up and placed on high, but they have proved false to me.
The ox knows its owner and the ass its master's crib,
But Israel has no knowledge; my people have no insight;

Ah! Sinful nation, people deep laden with guilt,
Race of evil-doers, perverse children!
They have forsaken the Lord;
They have spurned the Holy One of Israel;
They have become rebellious.

"On what place can you yet be smitten since you continue rebelling?
The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint,
From the sole of the foot to the head there is no soundness,
Only wounds and bruises and fresh sores,
Which have not been dressed nor bound up nor softened with oil."

With words of this kind, and in similar speeches, Isaiah tried to describe the condition of Judah to its people. The cowardice of Ahaz in throwing himself at the feet of the Assyrian had, indeed, smitten the land and the people very sore. The large tribute to Tiglath-Pileser had to be collected and paid. The burden was terrible to bear. In the meantime, Judah's enemies from the south and along the Mediterranean coast took advantage of the weakened condition of Judah and attacked the country from many points.

Isaiah tried, with all his might, to bring the people, as a whole, to an understanding of Judah's condition. He wanted them to join "The Remnant" and to live their lives in accordance with his teaching, which were really not his, but God's. Only in this way, Isaiah said, could a country that had fallen deeply into sin and unrighteousness, and was at the mercy of its enemies, be saved:

"Your land is a desolation, your cities are burned with fire,
Your tilled land—before your eyes strangers devour it;
And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard,
Like a lodge in a field of cucumbers, like a watchtower.

Unless the Lord of hosts had left us a remnant,
We should almost be as Sodom,
We would have been like Gomorrah."

This simile, comparing Jerusalem to these ancient cities of evil repute, was answered by Isaiah's opponents with the statement that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were idol worshipers, but that the people of Judah brought their sacrifices to the Temple and observed the holydays in accordance with the ancient laws. This was the same kind of an argument as the citizens in Samaria gave to Amos and Hosea.

Isaiah, however, who knew, and had taught "The Remnant" that sacrificing animals was not the true manner of worshiping God, replied as follows:

"Hear the word of the Lord, ye Rulers of Sodom;
Give heed to the instruction of our God, ye people of Gomorrah!
What care I for the great number of your sacrifices? saith the Lord.
I am sated with the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts,
And in the blood of bullocks and lambs and he-goats I take no pleasure.
When ye appear before me—who has required this of you?
Trample no more my courts, bring no more offerings,
Vain is the odor of incense—it is an abomination to me;
I am not able to endure a fast and a solemn assembly.
Your new moons and your appointed days my soul hateth.
I am tired of bearing it.
When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you.
Also, if ye make many prayers, I will not hear."

Then Isaiah launched forth into one of the most beautiful speeches that he delivered in his whole career. In it he brought home to the people the true idea

of the religion which God had commanded to Israel, and through which Judah could be regenerated, strengthened and saved:

> 'Your hands are stained with blood;
> Wash, that ye may be clean;
> Remove the evil of your deeds from before mine eyes.
> Cease to do evil; learn to do good;
> Seek justice; relieve the oppressed;
> Vindicate the orphan; plead for the widow."

In one of the sublimest passages that any prophet ever uttered, Isaiah promised the people God's forgiveness in the following wonderful appeal:

> "Come now, let us argue together, saith the Lord.
> Though your sins be as scarlet,
> They may become white as snow;
> Though they be red as crimson,
> They may become as wool;
> If ye willingly yield and are obedient,
> Ye shall eat the good of the land,
> But if you refuse and rebel,
> Ye shall be devoured by the sword.
> The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it!"

While Isaiah thus pleaded and threatened, he gained many additions to "The Remnant," but he failed to create a deep impression either with the reigning house or with the powerful priesthood or with the majority of the rich in Jerusalem and Judah.

In the meantime, a vassal of Assyria, in far-off Babylonia, rebelled successfully. Immediately, various Palestinian states, including Judah, began to prepare a similar attempt to free themselves from the Assyrian yoke.

Ahaz had died in 721, the year in which Sargon the Great captured Samaria, after a two year's siege, and effectually reduced the kingdom of Israel. Hezekiah, his young son, to whom Isaiah looked for the ideal prince he had pictured, succeeded him.

The calamity of the northern kingdom did not seem to bring Isaiah or Ahaz any warning. The king had been paying his Assyrian tribute regularly and faithfully; the prophet had centered his hope in "The Remnant" and in the crown prince, and bided his time.

When, however, six years later, in the year 715, Hezekiah joined the coalition of Palestinian states against Assyria, Isaiah was not only disappointed, but became greatly alarmed.

To permit Hezekiah to follow the advice of his father's counselors, Isaiah knew would be national suicide. For three years, therefore, while the agitation for coalition and rebellion was going on, Isaiah cast off his prophet's mantle and sandals, and walked barefooted and in the garb of a captive through the streets of Jerusalem, as an object lesson to the people of Judah, to show them what might await them if they rebelled against Assyria.

But even this, for the time being, was of no avail. Rebellion was in the blood of the king and the court clique. Somehow the very thought of it in Jerusalem seemed to reach the Assyrian capital. Hardly had Hezekiah begun to carry his contemplated revolt into action when Sennacherib, the new Assyrian king, was on the march.

Once more Judah was invaded by the Assyrian hosts, and once more Judah's rulers bent their knees in submission and undertook to pay a tribute that was heavier than ever before.

Yet Isaiah, though heartbroken, was in no way dismayed. His unbounded faith in the final triumph of God's purposes led him to go on, fearlessly, to oppose the king and his associates to the very end.

Chapter VII.

Like Father, Like Son.

A chain, we are told, is as strong as its weakest link. The weak link in the long chain of Assyrian provinces was the fact that whenever a new king came to the throne, if he happened to be away, fighting in the field, he had to hurry back to the capital, backed by the complete military force under his command, in order to establish himself firmly in his dominions.

Immediately upon the withdrawal of the king's armies from the field, all the provinces that hated Assyria bitterly, rebelled. Naturally, all the work of conquest had to be done over again. Then, when another change took place in the rulership of Assyria, the new king met the same conditions and the same difficulties.

When Tiglath-Pileser died, Shalmaneser IV., who laid siege to Samaria, was forced to reconquer all the Syrian and Palestinian tributaries. The great Sargon, who reduced Samaria and carried its inhabitants captive into the northern part of the Assyrian Empire, left his successor, Sennacherib, no better legacy.

With Sennacherib's ascension to the throne in the year 704, therefore, the usual thing happened—

rebellion broke out all along the line of his possessions.

In Palestine, King Hezekiah of Judah became the leader of a movement for a strong organization of all Palestinian and Syrian states and cities with the purpose of concerted rebellion against the new king.

So strong was the patriotism aroused among the various peoples that Padi, king of the city of Ekron, who would not join the proposed coalition, was captured by the citizens, bound in chains and handed over a prisoner to Hezekiah in Jerusalem.

It did not take Sennacherib long to make up his mind what to do. His predecessors had shown him the way. He organized a strong force, composed mostly of mercenaries, and marched at once into Phoenicia.

City after city fell before his prowess and he worked his way rapidly into Palestine. Unfortunately for Hezekiah and his allies, no concerted action could be agreed upon by them. Each one feared for himself; each one tried to be on the safe side.

Sennacherib took advantage of the situation in this rebellious district of his empire. He marched his armies, victorious throughout Phoenicia, into Palestine, meeting with success after success. The city of Tyre resisted most nobly on its own account, but it was no match for the Assyrians. Immediately after that Ekron, too, fell, and Judah itself was overrun by Sennacherib's troops.

The great disappointment of the Palestinian allies in this struggle for independence during the years 703-701, was that the help they looked for from the Arabian tribes to the south was very meagre, and that the horses and chariots they counted upon from Egypt did not materialize at all.

In Jerusalem, the prophet Isaiah counseled against the proposed rebellion from its very beginning. He warned Hezekiah, the leaders in Jerusalem, and even the nations who were entering into the coalition with Hezekiah, of the folly of this step. Knowing, as he did, the situation, the weakness of the leaders, the corruption within Judah and the demoralization of the army and the people generally, because of greed and oppression, he understood that Sennacherib's forces would rout the Palestinian forces unmercifully.

He wanted no coalition. He wanted Hezekiah and the Judeans to trust wholly in God. "Quietness and trust" was his motto and "Abiding faith in God" his standard.

"By repenting and remaining quiet you shall be delivered;
In resting and in trusting shall your strength consist."

Hezekiah, like his father, Ahaz, however, placed his trust in himself and in the power of his armies. There was no doubt in Hezekiah's mind but that the assistance that would come from Egypt would strengthen him sufficiently to defeat Sennacherib and gain complete independence for Judah.

Isaiah, who knew differently, preached openly against Hezekiah; but he had no more influence with the king than he had had with his father:

"Woe to the rebellious sons, is the oracle of Jehovah,
Carrying out a plan which is not mine,
Establishing a treaty contrary to my spirit,
So that they heap sin upon sin;
Who would set out for Egypt without asking my decision,
To flee to the shelter of Pharaoh,
And the refuge in the shadow of Egypt.
The shelter of Pharaoh wil be your shame,
And the refuge in the shadow of Egypt your confusion."

While Isaiah's position among the people, and his standing in the community in Jerusalem, made Hezekiah fear to do him bodily harm, or even to arrest him, the king and his counselors, who were, naturally, eager to gain all the assistance possible from the people at home, sent out men who were in favor of fighting Assyria to refute the opinions and arguments of Isaiah.

These men also called themselves prophets of God; but Isaiah saw in them only false prophets:

"For it is a rebellious people, lying sons,
Sons who will not heed Jehovah's instruction,
Who say to the seers, 'See not!'
And to those who have visions, 'Give us no vision of what is right!
Speak to us what is agreeable, give us false visions!
Turn from the way, go aside from the path,
Trouble is no more with Israel's Holy One.'"

When Sennacherib's armies finally came into Judah, Isaiah still saw the possibility of saving the

country from the horrors of devastation, and he warned the king and people in these words:

"Therefore, thus saith the Holy One of Israel,
Because ye reject this word,
And trust in perverseness and crookedness and rely thereon,
Therefore this guilty act shall be to you
Like a bulging breach in a high wall about to fall,
Suddenly, in an instant, will come its destruction;
Yea, its destruction shall be as when one dashes an earthen vessel in pieces, shattering it ruthlessly,
So that not a potsherd is found among the pieces
With which to take up fire from the hearth or to draw water from a cistern."

Notwithstanding the utter failure that faced Hezekiah in his course, neither he nor his counselors gave heed until Sennacherib had captured and destroyed forty-six fortified Judean cities and towns and had actually begun preparations for a siege of Jerusalem.

It was then that Hezekiah came to his senses. When Sennacherib was at Lachish, Hezekiah sent him a message which was almost a duplicate of the one sent by Ahaz to Tiglath-Pileser:

"I have offended; withdraw from me; whatever you lay on me I will bear."

The tribute that Sennacherib laid on Hezekiah was three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. To meet this, Hezekiah was forced to ransack the Temple in Jerusalem and the treasure-chamber of the royal palace. He was even forced to strip the doors and pillars of the Temple of their gold decorations in order to make up the enormous tribute to send to Sennacherib.

Judah once more lay a helpless tributary at the feet of Assyria. Sennacherib withdrew his armies and returned to Nineveh. Hezekiah had proved himself both a coward and a traitor; a traitor because he did not do all in his power to assist such allies as Tyre and Ekron; a coward because, unlike Tyre and Ekron, he did not fight Sennacherib to the bitter end.

It was only after his own country had been terribly devastated by the Assyrian mercenaries that he followed the advice which Isaiah gave him in the first place. Had he followed it before, he would have saved not alone his country and his people from the ravages of war, but he would have been spared the payment of so large a tribute and the desecration of the Temple.

The real reason why Sennacherib withdrew from before Jerusalem was the fact that, while he was engaged in Palestine, all the Babylonian provinces rebelled. He, therefore, received Hezekiah's message with a great deal of pleasure. In truth, he was eager to act upon it, for he had to hurry to Babylonia to subdue the rebels there.

Immediately after the Assyrian troops were out of Palestine, however, Hezekiah returned to his old policy and began a war to regain the forty-six cities which Sennacherib had conquered and in which he had left Assyrian governors.

Chapter VIII.

The Prophet Triumphs.

The fearful crisis through which Judah and Jerusalem had passed, before Sennacherib withdrew from Judah to fight his subjects in Babylonia, set both the king and the people to thinking.

Hezekiah had evidently become convinced that Isaiah's counsel for peace with Assyria was the best; for, after he had reconquered several of the fortified cities and towns captured by Sennacherib, he made an arrangement with the Assyrian king to pay an annual tribute peacefully, in order that his country should be at rest.

During the ten years that followed, Hezekiah, instead of seeking alliances with foreign nations, for the purpose of rebellion, devoted himself to building up his own country, and to reforming his own people, in line with the preaching of Isaiah.

Once, when Hezekiah was sick, Isaiah called on him at the palace. The prophet cheered him in his illness and expressed his hope for the king's speedy recovery. This call established a friendlier relationship between the king and the prophet.

At another time, Hezekiah invited Isaiah to the palace; and Isaiah was glad to go, because Hezekiah,

in his new policy, was following the commandments of God which, as taught by Isaiah, were destined to save the nation from its enemies.

"The Remnant," which Isaiah educated, now grew in great proportions, until it included the majority of Jews who were leading upright lives. Isaiah, himself, was established as a true prophet of God among his people.

Upon his recovery from his illness, Hezekiah began to reform the religious life of the country. He destroyed the "high places" on which many people offered sacrifices to strange gods. He broke up the brazen serpent to which the people sacrificed and which they worshiped from the days of the Wilderness. He destroyed many idols and practically banished idolatry from the land. Men turned from their evil ways; they left off their wrongdoing and dealt justly and honorably, one with another. Not only did they worship their God, but they had full faith in Him.

It so happened, therefore, in the year 690, when Sennacherib marshaled his great Assyrian army, in order to conquer Egypt, that another crisis came upon Hezekiah and Judah; but neither king nor people feared the Assyrians, because they now trusted in the God of their fathers to save them from the hands of their enemy.

Sennacherib had determined to conquer Egypt for two reasons: first, because none of his great prede-

cessors on the Assyrian throne had ever gone so far south in their conquest; second, because Egypt was always stirring up rebellion in the Assyrian provinces of Asia Minor, by promising them help. Sennacherib figured, therefore, that, with Egypt thoroughly subdued, the great Assyrian Empire would be permanently established and strongly founded on absolute union.

Sennacherib made one of his whirlwind marches toward Egypt. A little poem describing his march, is preserved in an ancient record:

"He has gone up from Rimmon.
He has arrived at Aiath.
He has passed through Migron.
At Michmash he lays up his baggage.
They have gone over the pass.
At Geba they halt for the night,
Ramah trembles.
Gibeah of Saul flees.
Shriek aloud, O people of Gallim.
Hearken, O Laishah.
Answer her, Anathoth.
Madmenah flees.
The inhabitants of Gebin are fled.
This very day he halts at Moab.
He shakes his fist against Mount Zion,
Against the Hill of Jerusalem."

Finally, Sennacherib had a problem to solve: He wanted to be sure of the friendship of Hezekiah, through whose land he would have to pass on his way to Egypt. He was afraid on the one hand, that, having passed through Judah, Hezekiah might rebel and attack him from the rear; on the other

hand, he wanted the city of Jerusalem to be a safeguard to himself, so that, if he should be defeated by the Egyptians, he could escape to its shelter.

Therefore, when he came within hailing distance of Jerusalem, he sent word to Hezekiah to deliver the city into his hands peacefully, and also to join with him in the proposed conquest of Egypt. Sennacherib was willing to furnish two thousand horses, if Hezekiah would furnish him two thousand men to mount them, and to join the Assyrian cavalry. He did not want to attack Jerusalem, because he could not afford to waste his strength on a long siege, and thus weaken his forces before he met Egypt on the battlefield.

But this time, Hezekiah, being older and wiser, and knowing that his people were certain that God was on their side, sent word back to Sennacherib that there was no reason whatever for such action on the part of Judah at this time since the country was at peace with Assyria, paying the tribute annually.

Encamped at Lachish, on the western border of Palestine, and eager to press on toward Egypt, Sennacherib thought to force Hezekiah into helping him by an unusual display of his power; so he sent his Commander-in-Chief, with a great retinue, to the king in Jerusalem.

A meeting was arranged between them and Hezekiah's representatives just outside of Jerusalem, at the conduit of the upper reservoir, the place where Isaiah first confronted King Ahaz.

King Hezekiah, himself, did not go out to receive the emissaries from the Assyrian army. Instead, he sent Eliakim, who was Governor of the Royal Palace, Shebnah, the Secretary of State, and Joah, the Chancellor of the Treasury.

A great assembly of the leading citizens of Jerusalem gathered upon the walls to see and hear the interview between the agents of Sennacherib and Hezekiah.

The spokesman for the Assyrians began:

"Thus saith the great king, the King of Assyria, 'What confidence is this which you cherish? You, indeed, think, a simple word of the lips is counsel and strength for the war!' Now, on whom do you trust, that you have rebelled against me?

"Indeed, you trust in the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, which, if a man lean on it, will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh King of Egypt to all who trust in him."

Eliakim, speaking of his king, attempted to make clear to the Assyrians that they were misjudging Hezekiah. He did not lean upon Egypt; no alliance had been entered into between the two nations; Judah did not desire to enter into this quarrel at all and relied upon neither Egypt nor Assyria. We trust in the Lord our God," concluded Eliakim.

Quick as a flash came back the reply from Assyria:

"If yo say to me, 'We trust in the Lord our God,' is not *he* the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah has taken away, and has said to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You shall worship on this altar in Jerusalem?'

"Now, therefore, give pledges to my master and King of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders upon them.

"How can you repulse one of the least of my master's servants? And yet you trust in Egypt for chariots and horsemen! Have I now come up against this place to destroy it without

God's approval? God it was who said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.'"

Shaken a little bit in their argument, and a great deal in their faith, Eliakim, Shebnah and Joah held a short consultation. Then Eliakim said to the spokesman, in a whisper:

"Speak, I pray you, to your servants in the Aramaic language, for we understand it; but do not speak with us in the Jewish language in the hearing of the people who are on the wall."

The Assyrian caught the drift of this request at once. He understood that the people had evidently not given up their idolatrous practices very graciously and that their trust in the Lord their God was not as great as that of Hezekiah. He, therefore, answered Eliakim, so that all could hear:

"Has my master sent me to your master and to you to speak these words? Is it not rather to the men who sit on the wall, that they shall eat their own refuse and drink their own water together with you?"

Then, walking away from the official group and facing the assembly on the walls, he cried with a loud voice in the Jewish language, saying:

"Hear the message of the great king, the King of Assyria. Thus saith the king, 'Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he will not be able to deliver you out of my hand.'

"Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in God by saying, 'God will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be given into the power of the King of Assyria.'

"Hearken not to Hezekiah, for thus saith the King of Assyria, 'Make your peace with me and come over to me; thus shall each one of you eat from his own vine and his own fig tree and drink the waters of his own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land full of grain and of new wine, a land full of bread and vineyards,

a land full of olive trees and honey, that you may live and not die.'

"But hearken not to Hezekiah, when he misleads you, saying, 'God will deliver us!' Has any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the power of the King of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Where are the gods of the land of Samaria that they have delivered Samaria out of my power? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of my power, that God should deliver Jerusalem out of my power?'"

This speech cast a deep gloom upon the people gathered upon the wall. All were silent. Not a single man, not even the representatives of the king, could answer the Assyrians' arguments.

Then Eliakim, Shebnah and Joah hastened back to Hezekiah and repeated to him the message of Sennacherib through his Commander-in-Chief. As soon as King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the Temple. He sent Eliakim, Shebnah and the eldest of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah, and they said to him:

Thus saith Hezekiah:

"This is a day of trouble and of discipline and of contumely. It may be God, thy God, will hear all the words of the high official, whom his master, the King of Assyria, has sent to defy the living God, and will rebuke the words which the Lord your God has heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left."

When Isaiah heard the message of the king, he sent back this reply of hope and courage to the palace:

"Thus saith the Lord: 'Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, with which the servants of the King of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold I will put forth a spirit in him so that he shall hear tidings and shall return

to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.'"

Hezekiah, acting upon the advice of Isaiah, then sent Sennacherib's emissaries back to Lachish with a flat refusal to do what the King had asked him.

When the Commander-in-Chief returned to Lachish, to his great amazement, Sennacherib and his army were not there. An officer who was left behind, however, told him that Sennacherib had broken camp and had marched against Libnah.

The next that was heard of the Assyrian armies in Jerusalem was that a plague had fallen upon the camp of Sennacherib and that, in great disgust and disappointment, the king and what remained of his forces, had returned to Nineveh.

It was at that time that Isaiah gave expression to conception of God's relationship to the nations of the earth that was entirely different from that held by the people up to this time.

According to Isaiah, God had used Assyria as a rod with which to whip the people of Judah, God's chosen people, into an understanding of His law and commandments, by which they should live.

Now, that Hezekiah and his people had thoroughly reformed and were following in the ways of God and His commandments, Assyria's work was done. Because Assyria, however, had prided herself that she had become a great power in the world on account of her own strength, God would now destroy Assyria.

"And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks."
—Isaiah II, 4.

This is the dirge that Isaiah sang regarding Assyria and God's hand in the life and death of nations, while Sennacherib was retreating toward Nineveh, his capital:

"Woe, Assyria, rod of mine anger,
The staff in whose hand is mine indignation.
Against an impious nation am I wont to send him.
And against the people of my wrath I give him charge,
To take spoil and gather booty,
And to tread them down like the mire in the streets.
But he—not so doth he plan;
And his heart—not so doth it purpose.
For destruction is in his heart,
And to cut off nations not a few.
For he saith, By the strength of my hand have I done it,
And by my wisdom, for I have discerned it;
And I have removed the bounds of thy peoples,
And I have robbed their treasuries,
And like a mighty man I have brought down those who sit enthroned.
And my hand hath seized, as on a nest,
The riches of the peoples.
And as one gathers eggs that are unguarded,
I, indeed, have carried off all the earth."

To this boasting of Assyria, God answers, speaking through Isaiah:

"Before me is thy rising up and thy lying down,
Thy going out and thy coming in.
I know thy raging against me
And thine arrogance hath come to my ears.
Therefore I will put my ring through thy nose,
And my bridle between thy lips,
And will make thee return,
By the way in which thou hast come."

Not long after this, while Sennacherib was worshiping in the temple of Nisroch, in Nineveh, he was attacked by his own sons and killed, and Esarhaddon, one of his sons, succeeded him on the throne of Assyria.

Chapter IX.

The Fruit of His Labor.

Blessed is the man whose toil and striving of a lifetime bring results, even though he, himself, does not live to see them!

Thrice blessed is the man, the fruit of whose labor is garnered while he is among the living, to see and enjoy it!

The prophet Isaiah was a thrice-blessed man. Although no one knows where or how he died, every one knows where and how he lived, and how his life was fruitful in blessings for his people.

He saw kings come and go on the throne of Judah. He passed through many crises in the history of his country. He experienced many woes because of his patriotic devotion to the welfare of his land and people.

But through it all he remained, uncomplainingly, staunch in his faith and true to his God. He believed, implicitly, in the justness of God and, therefore, in His demand of righteousness as the standard of living for the people. Isaiah's own strength, in time of trial and tribulation, came from his trust in God; and that same trust he urged upon Jerusalem and Judah in his day and, through his discourses, upon all men, for all time.

Thus it was given Isaiah to see the fruit of his labor in the peace and prosperity of Judah during the

remainder of his life which he, undoubtedly, spent in peace with his family in his home in Jerusalem.

It is no wonder that he conceived the ideal of a time of universal peace, in which God shall be the God of all the nations, an era in which all peoples shall come to Him, and believe in Him, and follow in His law, and live such just and righteous lives that there would be an end to war in all the earth:

"It shall come to pass, in the end of days,
That the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established at
the top of the mountains,
And it shall be exalted above the hills;
And peoples shall flow unto it.
And many nations shall go and say,
'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountains of the Lord,
And to the house of the God of Jacob;
And he will teach us of His ways,
And we will walk in His paths.'
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
And He shall judge between the nations,
And arbitrate for many peoples;
And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war any more."

The Commoner

The Commoner

Chapter I.

His Awakening.

Sloping down from the Judean hills toward the plain of Philistia and the Mediterranean Sea is the Shepelah, or Lowlands, a section of Palestine, far-famed for its stretches of rich farm lands, vineyards and olive groves.

These foothills were once the constant battlefield on which the Israelites from the hill country and the Philistines from the plain struggled for mastery; but, since the days of King Amaziah, who conquered Philistia soon after he came to the throne of Judah, in the year 798, the Shefelah, far away from the political turmoils in Samaria and Jerusalem, was one of the most peaceful and richest farm sections in Israel or Judah.

Up in Samaria, in the year 734, Hoshea, son of Elah, had played the traitor and had bent his head to Tiglath-Pileser, the Assyrian conqueror. Up in Jerusalem, Ahaz, son of Jotham, had acted the coward and had slipped his neck under the Assyrian yoke. But down in the Shefelah, on the lower highlands, politics and political intrigues played little part in the lives of the humble peasant folk.

Numerous towns and villages dotted the Shefelah, especially on the highway running northeast from

Gaza, in Philistia, to Jerusalem, in Judah. These towns and villages were the centers where the neighboring farmers gathered at set times and where the many daily wage earners lived all the time.

Rich and fertile sections like the Shefelah were the backbone, the strength and the power of Israel and Judah. While the high and mighty princes and merchants lived in the capitals and squandered their wealth, the simple and hard-working farm folk and wage earners made up the bone and muscle of the population, raised the necessities of life and, in times of need, furnished the sinews of war.

Yet, notwithstanding the fertility of the Shefelah, its rich fields and olive groves, its plentiful and well-watered pasture lands, the farmers in the entire section, had to live from hand to mouth. Though they labored hard at their toil, they were, in fact, poor and unable to lay aside anything for a rainy day.

It was very difficult to become reconciled to such a condition of affairs. No one seemed interested enough to fathom the reason for it, except a certain young peasant, named Micah, who had a home in the town of Moresheth, and was the proud possessor of several well-paying olive groves and vineyards in the vicinity.

Micah's interest in the population was aroused, one day, when the widow of one of his neighbors came to him for advice. Her husband had owned a farm, adjoining one of Micah's pastures, on which there was a heavy mortgage. Now that the head of the family was gone, the merchant in Jerusalem, who held the mortgage, threatened to eject the widow and the

children, because they could neither pay the amount borrowed nor the interest due thereon.

The sturdy young peasant, brought up in a home of severe simplicity, where gentleness and kindness were taught and practiced, pitied the woman and her children in their sad plight and loaned her the needed interest payment to stave off ejection from her home. Thereafter, he looked after her family until the oldest son was able to manage his own affairs.

Talking to some of his day-laborers he discovered a very amazing situation. He found that most of them had, at one time or another, owned their farms, but had lost possession of them through lawsuits, in which mortgage holders from Jerusalem had involved them, or through unjust treatment on the part of tax collectors and corrupt judges.

More amazing still was the knowledge that, all through the Shefelah, the majority of vineyards and olive groves were not owned by those who cultivated them, at all, but that they formed the vast estates of the princes and wealthy men of Jerusalem.

The beautiful and fertile Shefelah, then, was not the habitation of happy and contented tillers of the soil, who sang at their tasks and prided themselves upon their independence! It was in the heavy grip of a *land trust*, controlled by the great interests in the capital!

This knowledge caused Micah to enter upon his investigations with greater interest and deeper feeling. He discovered that the nobility and the rich were fattening upon the sweat and toil of the rural and work-

ing population. A farmer thrown into debt was sure to lose his acres, and a wage earner, having no possessions that could be taken from him, was sure to lose his liberty. Widows and orphans were quickly robbed of their inheritances by the greedy land-grabbers of the metropolis, aided by a corrupt judiciary.

All this was a severe shock to the young peasant. He, himself, born and raised on a farm, had inherited his father's estates free from debt. He lived simply, worked hard, saved a neat sum every year—and imagined that every one else was doing the same.

Awakened to the real condition of affairs, Micah now determined to leave his estates in the care of his trusted overseers and to go to the great and famed cities of his land, to study at first hand the causes that had made possible the terrible economic and social wrongs in his section of the country.

Chapter II.

The Cause of the Common People.

Micah, the Moreshtite, came to Jerusalem when the capital was at comparative peace. The struggle between King Ahaz and the Prophet Isaiah had narrowed down to an armed neutrality, as it were—the king was paying his tributes to Tiglath-Pileser and the prophet was preparing his "Remnant" for the day when the crown prince, Hezekiah, would come to the throne.

The young peasant took no sides and embraced no causes in Jerusalem. He stood aside, the better to study conditions as an onlooker. To his great dismay and sorrow, he found the situation even worse than he had imagined it. It was true of the rich and mighty of the capital that

> "They covet fields and seize them,
> And houses, and take them away.
> They oppress a man and his house,
> Even a man and his heritage."

This much was clear on the surface of things. Rapacity on the part of the rich meant oppression of the poor; increase of power for the mighty meant decrease of opportunity for the humble tiller of the soil and for the wage earner.

Seeing all this and understanding it, Micah felt himself impelled to fight the cause of the common people.

Conditions and a sympathetic soul thus made Micah a Prophet.

One of the people, he spoke in their behalf with the feeling and passion of a man who has been through the mill of bitter experience:

Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits,
As when they glean the grapes of the vintage:
There is no cluster to eat,
Nor first-ripe fig which my soul desireth.

The godly man has perished out of the earth,
And the upright among men is no more:
They all lie in wait for blood;
They hunt every man his brother with a net.
Both hands are put forth for evil,
To do it diligently.
The prince asketh and the judge is ready for reward,
And the great man, he uttereth the evil of his soul;
Thus they weave it together.
The best of them is as a brier;
The most upright is worse than a thorn hedge.
A man's enemies are the men of his own house.

Where shall he look for help and guidance—he, a commoner, without power, without influence? To whom shall he go for instruction, for inspiration, to struggle against conditions in the face of which he was helpless?

Micah returned to Moresheth to think matters over at his leisure. It was not an easy or simple task that he had voluntarily assumed.

One source of strength he always had to rely upon. Close to the soil, seeing the Creator's handiwork in the fields at his feet by day and in the wonders of the starry firmament by night, he was full of the spirit of God.

At the very outset of his self-imposed mission he could exclaim, fervently:

> "But as for me, I will look unto the Lord:
> I will wait for the God of my salvation:
> My God will hear me."

God's guiding hand often leads us to our destinations by winding and unexpected paths. It is strange to record that Micah's first opportunity, in the task he had set before himself, came to him by way of Egypt and an Ethiopian usurper. The ambitions of that wily Pharaoh led directly to the fall of Samaria and to the Commoner's first great prophetic utterance.

Chapter III.

When Samaria Fell.

A man who is a traitor to his country will, in all likelihood, prove traitorous to his avowed friends.

Hoshea, son of Elah, of Samaria, was such a man. Tilgath-Pileser, the Assyrian conqueror of Damascus, assisted Hoshea to assassinate King Pekah, and appointed the assassin to rule in Pekah's stead, in the year 734 B. C. E., merely as a matter of expediency. It was an easier method of re-annexing the rebellious Kingdom of Israel to the Assyrian Empire without cost of life or treasure, and he stooped to it.

But when Tiglath-Pileser died and Shalmaneser IV succeeded him on the throne in Nineveh, Hoshea gave ear to the siren voice of Egypt, and rebelled.

It is related that Hoshea sent an embassy to King So, more correctly, Pharaoh Sabako, of Egypt, when that energetic Ethiopian prince became master over the whole of the ancient Nile country.

The new Pharaoh had ambitions northward. It was he who organized a coalition of Assyrian provinces in the Mediterranean country, with an eye to Nineveh. The traitor, Hoshea, proved the miserable stuff he was made of by joining actively in Sabako's ambitious schemes.

In answer to Sabako, Shalmaneser rushed his veteran troops toward Egypt. The Kingdom of Israel was the first rebellious province he had to deal with. Hoshea was prepared when, in 723, Samaria was be-

sieged. Samaria held out bravely enough for two years, waiting all the time for help from Egypt. But Sabako's promised armies and funds never came.

Shalmaneser died during this siege; but his successor, the great Sargon, came on with re-enforcements and finally, in 721, captured and reduced Samaria, before Hoshea's Egyptian ally had been heard from.

That was the end of the Kingdom of Israel, founded by Jeroboam ben Nebat, in the year 937, B. C. E., when he rebelled from Rehoboam, King Solomon's son. The Kingdom of Israel had lasted just 218 years.

Sargon sent away 27,290 captives, the youth and pride of Israel and Samaria, and had them scattered widely apart, in all his provinces. The conqueror, himself, proceeded southward to meet and defeat Sabako, at Raphia, on the great Nile-delta-highway along the Mediterranean coast.

While the records do not show that these events made any impression upon the leaders of thought, such as Isaiah, in Jerusalem, they brought Micah his first opportunity to prohesy.

Living in Moresheth, on the highroad from Gaza to Jerusalem, Micah, who up to this time knew only of the corruption of the classes and the oppression of the masses of Judah, now had first-hand information of the political situation, as well.

Sargon's armies captured and passed through Gaza on their march to Raphia. By way of Gaza, Micah learned that Samaria had not been razed to the ground. There was, therefore, hope for the city and for Israel.

Micah's hope, however, was not political. He, unlike Isaiah in Jerusalem, was not concerned with

politics. His concern was with the social wrongs and economic outrages of which, as he had now learned, both Israel and Judah were victims.

There was this distinction, however, Israel had already collected the wages of its sins, had paid the price and had been chastised by the rod of Assyria; Judah might be recalled to its better self and escape a similar calamity.

So, before the dust of Sargon's victorious armies, passing through Gaza, had settled in the roads, Micah went again to Jerusalem and launched forth earnestly and with vigor upon his prophetic mission.

In his very first public utterance he drew a deadly parallel between Israel and Judah:

"Hear, ye peoples, all of you;
Hearken, O earth, and all that therein is:
And let the Lord God be witness against you,
The Lord from His holy temple.

For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of His place.
And will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.
And the mountains shall be molten under Him,
And the valleys shall be cleft,
As wax before the fire,
As waters that are poured down a steep place.

For the transgression of Jacob is all this,
And for the sins of the house of Israel.
What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria?
And what are the high places of Judah?
Are they not Jerusalem?"

Fearlessly, with bold strokes, and in vivid pictures, he described the terrible conditions as he knew them:

"Hear, I pray you, ye chiefs of Jacob,
And ye judges of the house of Israel!
You surely ought to know what is just!

"For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel."—Micah I, 5.

Yet, you hate good and love evil;
You who devour the flesh of my people,
Flay their skin from off of them,
And break their bones!"

It was possible for Judah to be saved, if the governing classes, the judiciary, the great landowners and the wealthy merchants dealt justly and righteously with the common people, the poor, the peasant and the wage earner:

"For this will I lament and wail;
I will go stripped and naked;
I will make a wailing like the jackals,
And a lamentation like the ostriches."

Micah did more than merely preach and wail. Down in the Shefelah he set himself to help his fellow-peasants and to correct the injustices practiced upon them, wherever he could.

But the western foothills were not the whole of Judah; and the origin and source of the demoralizing wickedness lay not in the farm sections, but in the capital; and as to the capital, "her wounds are incurable." The cause of the downfall of Samaria and Israel

"Is come even to Judah;
It reacheth unto the gate of my people,
Even unto Jerusalem."

Therefore Micah, less hopeful than Isaiah, who was biding his time for a change of heart in the rulers and chiefs of the country, said of the coming of the day of reckoning:

"Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but He will not answer them:
Yea, He will hide His face from them at that time,
According as they have wrought evil in their doings."

Chapter IV.

Judah Learns its Lesson.

King Hezekiah's preparation for rebellion against Sennacherib, in 715, shattered any optimistic hopes that Micah held for a continuation of improvement in the condition of the common people, in which he had been instrumental up to this time. The costs of war always fell heaviest on the poor, and the devastating results of war upon the farming population.

Younger and readier to act than his older contemporary, Isaiah, he was not satisfied with a negative warning, such as the older prophet gave the leaders in Jerusalem when he walked about the city barefoot and in the garb of a slave.

Micah came up to the capital to stir it up; and he did set the people to talking and to thinking when, in a memorable speech, he differed fundamentally from Isaiah in his declaration that the Temple, the very House of God, as well as the city in which it was situated, could and would be destroyed:

> "Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob,
> And rulers of the house of Israel,
> That abhor justice and pervert all equity;
> That build up Zion with blood,
> And Jerusalem with iniquity.
> The heads thereof judge for reward,
> And the priests thereof teach for hire,
> And the prophets thereof divine for money;
> Yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say,
> 'Is not the Lord in the midst of us?
> No evil shall come to us."

Therefore shall Zion, for your sake, be plowed as a field,
And Jerusalem shall become Leaps,
And the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest."

Micah, naturally, received opposition from the same clique of false prophets that opposed Isaiah, and made his labors so difficult and, at first, unsuccessful; that misled king and people, "that bite with their teeth and cry, 'Peace,' to make my people to err." To these Micah gave as well as he received:

"The seers shall be put to shame,
And the diviners confounded.
Yea, they shall all cover their lips,
For there is no answer of God.
But as for me,
I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord,
And of judgment and of might,
To declare unto Jacob his transgression
And unto Israel his sin."

For years Micah kept at his task. He was indeed a tribune of the people, the champion of their rights against the vested interests, the great commoner of his day and time, fearlessly and courageously standing out against all opposition, trusting absolutely in God.

At last came the crisis of 704-1 and Hezekiah's memorable change of mind and heart. Micah played no mean part with Isaiah, in Hezekiah's reforms that followed.

Reforms were needed, however, not alone by "the heads of the house of Jacob" and "the rulers of the house of Israel," not alone in the courts of law and among the priests and prophets; they were needed as well in the religious beliefs and practices of the common people, whose cause was Micah's cause.

With the passing of all political danger to the fatherland, Micah retired permanently to his farms in Moresheth. There he devoted the remainder of his peaceful, happy years to teaching the common people, "*my* people," as he fondly refers to them, the religious, moral and ethical life that God demanded of them.

Micah employed the same vivid, picturesque language in his speeches of peace as he did in his addresses of war. There is extant a remarkable oration in which he pictures a religious controversy between God and his people, and in which he makes a declaration of what *true religion* is that has not been better phrased in all the thousands of books that have been written on religious subjects since that day.

The address is in the form of a dialogue between God and Israel, and reads as follows:

"Hear ye now what the Lord is saying:
Arise, contend thou before the mountains,
And let the hills hear thy voice.
Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy,
And ye enduring rocks, the foundations of the earth:
For the Lord hath a controversy with His people,
And He will plead with Israel."

Then God is pictured pleading with the people:

"O my people, what harm have I done unto thee?
And wherein have I wearied thee?
Testify against me.
Is it because I brought thee out of the land of Egypt,
And redeemed thee out of the house of bondage,
And sent before thee Moses, Aaron and Miriam?
O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, devised,
And what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him;
(Remember what took place) from Shittim unto Gilgal,
That ye may know the righteous acts of the Lord."

As with the purely religious teachings of the older prophets, the people could not quite understand Micah. They believed that religion consisted in offering the prescribed sacrifices regularly, and that, in having fulfilled this obligation they had performed their religious duties.

The average Judean's idea of religion, of the relationship between man and God, was that of a *bargain* between man and God; so many sacrifices brought to God, so many favors from God, in return; the more precious and numerous the sacrificial oils and burnt offerings, even to one's children, offered to God, the more precious and numerous would be the blessings from God.

To this false idea Micah replies, with irony that stings, in these words:

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,
And bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,
With calves of a year old?
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
Or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my first-born for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

To which God answers, through Micah, in the world-famed and unparalleled definition of religion:

"It hath been declared unto thee, O man, what is good:
Yea, what doth the Lord require of thee,
But to do justice, and to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with thy God?"

The Prophet of Woe and Hope

The Prophet of Woe and Hope

Chapter I.

The Escape.

The entirely unexpected assassination of King Amon, of Judah, in the year 639, surprised and appalled the entire country, as well as Jerusalem, the capital.

King Amon had succeeded his father, Manasseh, to the throne of Judah but two years before. He had had no chance to show the character of man he was and the type of a ruler he would be, and yet, without apparent knowledge on anybody's part that a conspiracy was brewing among the princes of the royal palace itself, Amon's life was snatched away in a most cruel manner.

The evening of the tragedy in the king's household was no different than the many others that had preceded it during the time of Amon's reign. The king and queen had just said good-night to their eight-year-old-son Josiah and his little friend Jeremiah, who had spent the day with the young prince, and had sent them to bed, in the wing of the palace occupied by the princes, in care of Ebed-melech, a young Ethiopian slave, of whom both boys were very fond.

Jeremiah, who was the son of the high priest Hilkiah, lived in Anathoth, the exclusive suburb

to the north of Jerusalem, where the wealthy, priestly families had their homes.

It was after much begging on the part of Josiah with his royal father, and on the part of Jeremiah with his mother, that permission was given Jeremiah to accompany his father into Jerusalem and to spend the day and night with Josiah in the palace.

The high priest and the king were great friends, though they differed from each other on matters of politics and religion. Hilkiah was a follower of the religious practices and ideals of the prophet Isaiah, while Amon was inclined to follow the religious practices and ideals of his father, King Manasseh.

A very strange thing happened in Jerusalem and Judah when both the good King Hezekiah and the great prophet Isaiah died and young Manasseh came to the throne. The many religious and social reforms that were instituted by Hezekiah under the guidance and inspiration of Isaiah, and which saved the country from the ravages of the Assyrian conqueror, were brought to a sudden halt by King Manasseh.

It seems that the young king was entirely under the influence of the party at court. This party, composed mostly of Manasseh's young friends, differed with the opinions of the old men who stood by Hezekiah and Isaiah. It was the story of Rehoboam and of Ahaz all over again. The king listened to the advice of his boon companions instead of to the counsel of the sages.

Manasseh had another reason which, in his own mind and in the minds of his advisers, justified the reaction he led against the teachings of "the remnant" founded by Isaiah, and later taken up by Hezekiah.

Assyria, after the death of Sennacherib, had become the great world power at which all the Assyrian kings, from Tiglath-Pileser III down, had aimed. Sennacherib's successors actually conquered Egypt twice, thus extending the sway of Assyria, with its capital at Nineveh, over the whole of the then known world.

During both wars in which Egypt was defeated, the little kingdom of Judah was, by its geographical location, the stamping ground for the Assyrian armies. Judah was called upon during these wars to do more than pay its regular tribute. It was forced to furnish food, supplies, horses, shelter and camps to the Assyrians.

The suffering of the Jewish people at the hands of the Assyrians was greater than ever before, and the court party asked the king whether the nation was better off when following in the footsteps of Isaiah and Hezekiah and worshiping the God of Isaiah and Hezekiah, than it would be if it worshiped the gods of the Assyrians, the worshipers of which were always victorious over their enemies.

While the Assyrian armies were coming and going through Judah, Manasseh was anxious not alone to show his loyalty to the Assyrian throne by the punctual payment of the tribute levied on Judah, but to show also his personal faithfulness to the kings of Assyria by paying homage to their gods.

So Manasseh began a bloody campaign against "the remnant", who were now called the Prophetic Party in opposition to the Court Party. Jerusalem flowed with the blood of the martyrs, who were nowhere safe from the power of Manasseh and the princes.

So great and good a man as the high priest Hilkiah, Jeremiah's father, had to hide his most inward religious beliefs and convictions in order to escape the sword of King Manasseh.

When, after a reign of forty-five years, Manasseh died, the Prophetic Party looked eagerly to Amon, the new king, in the hope that he would change conditions in the land from those established by his father; but Amon permitted all the heathen shrines that were erected everywhere in Judah, and even in the Temple in Jerusalem, to remain.

Just why, therefore, the Court Party assassinated King Amon will never be known. The fact remains that on this particular evening in the year 639, armed men sprang up in the palace as if by magic. The royal family was completely exterminated, with the exception of the boy Josiah, who had retired with Jeremiah, his young guest, to the nursery.

Hilkiah, Jeremiah's father, who, after taking leave of his boy and seeing the two youngsters in the care of Ebed-melech, was preparing for the hour's trip to his home in Anathoth, was as completely dazed by the uprising and as unprepared for it as was the king himself.

The conspirators, however, had no design on Hilkiah's life; and so, in the pandemonium that reigned in the palace, Hilkiah stole quietly up to the nursery.

At the door he met Ebed-melech on guard. The young Ethiopian always waited just outside the little princes' apartment until he was sure that the boys' every wish was satisfied and that they were asleep, before retiring to the servants' quarters.

Hilkiah did not speak to Ebed-melech. In his excitement he probably did not see him. He opened the door, which was not locked, hurriedly, and entered, followed closely by the Ethiopian, who surmised, from Hilkiah's appearance, that something unusual had happened.

Instead of finding the boys tucked away in bed, asleep, he found them wide awake, at play. Josiah had leaned a tiny chair up against the posts at the foot of the bed, propped it up with pillows, and, with a wand in his hand, was playing at king. Jeremiah, in another part of the room, had bound and laid several toy animals upon a little table and was playing at high priest.

When Hilkiah broke into the nursery the boys stopped suddenly at their play and looked shamefacedly at the priest. They did not notice the flushed face nor the anxious, eager look in his eyes that changed immediately to hope as he snatched both lads in his arms, bade them be silent and started out of the nursery.

Ebed-melech was at his heels, asking what was wrong. Hilkiah told him of the uprising, in a few whispered words. The Ethiopian thereupon took the amazed Josiah in his brawny arms and led the way through the servants' hall to the court yard.

In the tumult that reigned within the palace Hilkiah, Ebed-melech and their burdens were not noticed by the conspirators. Unmolested, they made their way into the royal gardens. There they hid in the shrubbery with the boys, whose cries had been stopped by commands and pleading.

When the noise quieted down in the palace and the conspirators had evidently been satisfied with their work, Hilkiah, carrying Jeremiah, and Ebed-melech carrying Josiah, quietly stole out of the garden and made their way through a narrow by-way crossing the Mount of Olives to Anathoth.

They arrived at Hilkiah's home at daybreak, both boys asleep. Jeremiah's mother, almost distracted by anxiety, met the four eagerly at the door, and, after a few words of whispered explanation by her husband, she understood what had happened.

Silently and with the help of servants the two boys were brought into Jeremiah's room, where they slept peacefully, being none the wiser for the tragedy in the palace in Jerusalem.

Chapter II.

The Boy King.

It was interesting to see, the next morning, the effect upon the two boys when they discovered that instead of being in Josiah's bed in the palace in Jerusalem they were in Jeremiah's, at his home in Anathoth.

Josiah thought it was a great joke and laughed at the miracle, as he called it, that was performed during the night. Jeremiah, however, being two years older than his friend and of a more active mind and imagination, tried quietly to study out what had taken place.

Just as Josiah was figuring the miracle all out, Jeremiah's mother entered the room. The dear woman was choked up with tears and could not say a word. In reply to the volley of questions with which she was greeted, she merely pressed the two boys to her bosom and kissed them.

Her trembling arms made the lads feel that something had gone wrong. They clung to her most affectionately. She told them to dress quickly; that it was already late in the day; that breakfast was waiting for them and, she added smilingly, that if somebody did not reach the breakfast room in a hurry somebody would be scolded.

At breakfast she unfolded the story of the tragedy in the palace very guardedly and with great care,

so that the blow should not fall too heavily upon Josiah. When she finally told them that the King and Queen were dead, the boys broke out in loud weeping. It was all she could do to comfort and quiet them.

Just at this time, Hilkiah, Jeremiah's father, who had gone back to the city for news, returned. He related that Jerusalem was in a great uproar. The conspirators in the palace, who had proclaimed one of their number as king, were having a hard time of it with the army and the people.

It seemed that the assassins were not at all well organized and that the assassination was most unpopular. The army proved faithful to the royal house and the people sided with the army.

When Hilkiah had announced to the leaders of the army and the people that the whole of Amon's family was not destroyed, but that young Josiah was safe at Anathoth, there was great public rejoicing amid the mourning for the king. Within a few hours the army laid siege to the palace which was in the possession of the conspirators.

During the three days that followed the palace was besieged by a detachment from the army. Many of the leading men of Jerusalem and many of the army officers came to Hilkiah's home, in the meantime, to see the young prince and to pay homage to him as his father's successor on the throne; but Hilkiah would not permit them to see or speak to Josiah until the siege was successful and the usurpers put out of the way.

When the palace finally fell and the conspirators were put to death, a great concourse of people, headed by the king's guard, marched to Anathoth, gathered before Hilkiah's home and called for the Prince.

Hilkiah brought Josiah to a window in the second story of the house. Upon seeing him a great shout went up from the crowd below:

"The king!"
"The king!"

The captains of the host then entered the house and consulted with Hilkiah while the crowd outside carried on happily over the survivor of the ancient dynasty.

After a little while the captains, surrounding Josiah who was sitting on Hilkiah's shoulders, reappeared. A shout of acclaim greeted them. Then began a triumphant march back to Jerusalem.

At the gates the whole city of loyal people greeted them. The royal chariot was waiting. Instead of horses, picked young men drew it to the palace where Josiah was proclaimed king in his father's stead.

So it happened, in the year 639, that a boy eight years old reigned as king in Jerusalem.

Chapter III.

Jeremiah's Call.

Josiah and Jeremiah passed through the first great and vital experience of their lives together and the friendship between these two lads was thereby knit as closely as was that of David and Jonathan.

From the very beginning of Josiah's mounting the throne of Judah, this friendship promised even to outrival that of the king's great ancestor and Saul's son. Every day Hilkiah had to bring Jeremiah to the palace, because the young king was not permitted to leave Jerusalem and go to Anathoth.

One of the very first official acts of the king was to make Ebed-melech a freedman; but the young Ethiopian chose to remain at the palace in Jerusalem, to be at the right hand of his master, even to put the young king to bed, for many years after he was crowned, as he had done the baby prince.

This friendship of Josiah and Jeremiah had an unlooked-for effect upon the former; for, though teachers in all the subjects that pertained to the education of the young king were appointed, Hilkiah, the high priest, practically became the young monarch's guardian and father.

In fact, the older Josiah grew the more he understood the love of Hilkiah for him and the heroic act he had performed in saving him on that terrible night of the conspiracy.

So it happened that while the boy king was instructed by special tutors in the laws and intricacies of government, his religious and moral training came under the influence of Hilkiah. This meant that the moral qualities that make for manhood and character, and the principles of religious belief that were developed in Josiah, were identical with those that Hilkiah taught his own son.

At the suggestion of Hilkiah, a cousin of the young king, named Zephaniah, a member of the Prophetic Party and follower of the teachings of Isaiah, was appointed Josiah's religious instructor. The king, therefore, grew up in total ignorance of the idolatrous religious beliefs and practices introduced by his grandfather, Manasseh, and practiced by his father, Amon.

Josiah was so busy with the many things relating to the government of his kingdom that he had no time to study his religion very deeply, but the moral influence of Zephaniah and Hilkiah was very apparent in his development and showed their effect in his later years.

Jeremiah, on the other hand, received an education on much broader and more general lines. Not burdened with cares of state, he studied first of all the history of his own people and his own religion, and the history and religion of the other peoples with whom his country came in contact. In his religious training he was grounded deeply in the religious history of now almost forgotten Israel as well as of Judah. He paid special attention to the

moral and religious condition of his country and of its people and made himself master of his father's ideals, which meant the ideals and hopes of the older prophets.

As Jeremiah advanced in years and Josiah took the reins of government more and more into his own hands, the former's visits to the palace became less and less frequent.

Jeremiah delighted to stay in Anathoth. He spent many hours studying in his own room. He roamed among the barren hills near his village from which, looking down the ravine, a view could be had of the blue waters at the north end of the Dead Sea.

He often came across the many altars that had been erected on the high hills and in thick groves in imitation of the heathen. Even in the city of Jerusalem, the religious legacy left by King Manasseh had not been destroyed. The Temple Courts were desecrated by images and the Temple itself defiled by idolatrous practices.

The teachings of his father and the religious influence of his home were great factors in turning Jeremiah's mind to view these abominations with alarm for his people. Idolatry and heathen worship led the people to practice vice and commit crimes that were abhorrent to the religious ideas and ideals taught by such men as Amos, Hosea and Isaiah in the days gone by, and by Zephaniah and Hilkiah in Jeremiah's time.

Now Jeremiah knew very well that when Josiah reached the age of manhood the influence of

Zephaniah and Hilkiah upon him would tell. He felt quite sure that, in due time, religious and moral reforms would be introduced into the country by the king. He was convinced, nevertheless, that a movement for reform of some kind must come from the people at large as well as from the king.

Sometimes he thought that the people ought to be prepared for the reforms that Josiah would surely introduce. Often, therefore, he felt the voice of God speaking within him, urging him on to go down into the city and there speak to the people of the living God, of His love for them and of His religious and moral demands upon them.

One day, in the early spring, while roaming among the hills, meditating upon the thoughts that consumed all his waking hours, he stopped before an almond tree. It was just beginning to shoot its earliest leaves. He contemplated this wonderful miracle of nature. He saw the hand of God working through that tree; he saw that God must be very watchful over the things He created; he saw in that tree a symbol—God's message to him that the immoral and ungodly people of Jerusalem and Judah could be awakened to a new life, even as the almond tree was blooming into new life.

At another time he was watching carelessly a boiling caldron. A wind unexpectedly came up from the north, so strong that Jeremiah thought the caldron would turn over and empty its contents upon the ground. In this, too, Jeremiah saw a symbol—a call from God to warn the people of Judah against the oncoming of the Scythian hordes that were roam-

ing at large over the once great Assyrian empire, even reaching the little states along the Mediterranean.

One night, in his room, Jeremiah was thinking over these and similar incidents that had been happening to him quite frequently of late. Though ready to retire, he knew that he could not sleep, because a terrible restlessness was consuming his mind and heart.

Noiselessly, he stole out of the house into the open. It was one of those wonderful full-moon, spring nights, when the sky is clear blue, unclouded and studded with myriads of stars, stars, stars.

Jeremiah breathed in deeply and tramped out into the hills. He walked lightly, as on air, without fatigue. A strange feeling, as if he wished to get away from himself, drove him on. Finally, he reached a point from which he could discern the most northerly corner of the Dead Sea. For awhile he stood in his favorite spot and meditated, though he could not, for the world of him, say what was passing through his mind.

He pressed his temples with his open palms, hoping in that way to clear up the jumble of thoughts tumbling about in his head. He clenched his fists. He beat the palm of his left hand with the fist of his right. He raised his arms to heaven, as if pleading for advice and guidance. He was, evidently, passing through a great, inward struggle.

Then he heard a voice, clearly and distinctly, saying over and over again:

Before I formed thee, I knew thee;
Before thou camest forth, I sanctified thee.
I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations.

and he knew that God was speaking to him.

A stifled groan escaped his lips. The muscles of his face and body, tense up to this moment, relaxed. He dropped to his knees and gave up the fight. He buried his face in his arms and cried, in a muffled voice:

Alas, O Lord God!
Behold, I do not know how to speak;
I am only a youth.

This plea showed clearly what inward agonies Jeremiah had been through. Timid by nature, he shrank from God's call to him to go out and prophesy to the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and he struggled against it. Although he was now a young man of twenty-four or five, he feared to undertake this great task and to answer the call. He felt that he was yet too young and unprepared to deliver the message of God to his people.

But God answered him, saying:

Do not say, "I am only a youth";
For to all to whom I shall send thee, thou shalt go,
And whatever I command thee, thou shalt speak.
Be not afraid of them,
For I am with thee to deliver thee.

And Jeremiah tells us that God, having stretched out His hand toward him and touched his lips to purify them, spoke to him further:—

> Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth;
> See, I have set thee this day over the nations and kingdoms,
> To tear up, to break down and to destroy, to build up and to plant.

Now that God had selected him for a distinct and set purpose in life, no matter how incapable and unworthy he deemed himself, and being assured of His help and protection, Jeremiah walked slowly homeward. For the first time he noticed that the sun had risen big and bright and warm. His mind was calm and at rest, but his heart was filled with woe because of what the future held out for him and his people.

Chapter IV.

The Seething Caldron.

An old Hebrew proverb says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he shall not depart from it." If one should say that the man who wrote this proverb must have thought of King Josiah, the statement could not be entirely denied. For the religious training he received at the hands of Zephaniah and Hilkiah soon showed itself in the way he began to revolutionize the religious life of Judah.

When he was only eighteen years old he began to uproot the heathen worship that had been reintroduced by his grandfather, after the death of Hezekiah and Isaiah. His aim was to cleanse the land entirely of the foreign altars and sanctuaries that Manasseh had erected to the gods of Babylonia and Assyria.

In the twelfth year of his reign, that is, in the year 627, the old chronicler tells us, Josiah

> "brake down the altars of the Baalim in his presence; and the sun-images that were on high above them he hewed down; and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them, and purged Judah and Jerusalem."

It was at this time that the decline in the fortunes of Assyria set in. Esarhaddon and his suc-

cessor, Ashurbanipal, preserved a semblance of holding the empire together; but it was not for long. Built up by mercenaries, whose fighting was for pay and not for their country, the weak rulers who followed Ashurbanipal on the throne in Nineveh hurled the empire quickly to its fall.

Even in the last days of the cultured and illustrious Ashurbanipal the outlying provinces of Assyria became independent. The Assyrian governors were slowly withdrawn from the tributaries along the Mediterranean Sea, and Judah, always ready to resist a foreign yoke, began to feel its independence.

Josiah added to his territory most of what had been the kingdom of Israel and reigned over a country that nearly equalled in size that of David and Solomon. This good fortune of Judah, perhaps more than anything else, convinced the king that God was again favoring his nation, and that, therefore, it was time to remove from his dominions all those things that were abominations in the sight of God.

Now, it is one thing to cleanse a land of its outward show of idolatrous worship and abominable practices and another to purge the hearts and minds of a people that have been sotted with these for more than two generations. To do the latter never entered into Josiah's calculations. He didn't even give it a thought. But the uselessness of outward reforms, without inward chastening, did not escape the deep-thinking Jeremiah.

It was evident to him that Josiah was only scratching the surface and he wanted to come to the well-meaning king's help. Notwithstanding his call and his conviction that his life work as a prophet had been determined upon even before his birth, Jeremiah was yet too timid to take up his burden among the people until the word of God came to him a second time, saying:

"Gird up thy loins and arise,
Speak to them all that I command thee,
Do not be terrified before them, lest I terrify thee in their presence;
For behold, I myself make thee this day a fortified city,
And a brazen wall against the kings of Judah, its princes, and the common people.
And they shall fight against thee, but they will not overcome thee,
For I am with thee to deliver thee."

So Jeremiah's course was not to be smooth and easy! He would encounter opposition from the common people, the princes, the king himself! But there was no turning back for him now! Though his heart was heavy, it was determined. Jeremiah went down to Jerusalem to preach.

His first pleadings were in line with Josiah's reforms:

"A voice is heard upon the bare heights, the weeping and the supplications of the children of Israel; because they have perverted their way, they have forgotten the Lord their God.
Return ye backsliding children;
I will heal your backsliding."

Jeremiah began his eventful career with the old cry of Amos and Hosea, against the widespread evil,

the seething caldron of idolatry and wrongdoing that threatened the destruction of the nation. It was far more serious, however, than in the days of the earlier prophets. Then the people worshiped idols and seemed to know no better; now the people employed all the ancient idolatrous practices for worshiping the idols and the heavenly bodies and God at the same time.

Therefore, Jeremiah heard from the people at the idols' shrines, in reply to his pleadings, practically the same answer that greeted Amos at Bethel:

> "Behold, we have come unto thee,
> For thou art the Lord our God."

To this false idea that God-worship and idol-worship are the same thing, Jeremiah gave answer patiently and kindly, as if reasoning with children, recalling what God had accomplished for Israel in the past and the duty of obedience to His voice by Israel's descendants in the present:

> "Truly in vain is the help that is looked for from the hills, the tumult of the mountains; truly the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. But the shameful thing (idolatry) hath devoured the labor of our fathers from our youth, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. Let us lie down in our shame, and let our confusion cover us; for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day; and we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God."

Then Jeremiah delivered a message of hope, of God's promise to the people, in case they should return from their backsliding:

> "If thou wilt return, O Israel," saith the Lord, "if thou wilt return unto me, and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight; then shalt thou not be removed; and thou shalt swear, 'As the Lord liveth,' in truth, in justice, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory."

Jeremiah aimed at first merely to arouse the people to a knowledge of their false point of view toward God; but he soon discovered that he was on the wrong track. Pleading, persuasion, promises and prophecies of hope had no more effect upon the daily life of the people than did Josiah's destruction of the shrines and sanctuaries upon their religious practices.

It was at this time that evil days came upon the Empire of Assyria. It was crumbling to pieces. From north of the Black Sea and from east of the Carpathian Mountains savage hordes of Scythians were swarming over Assyria. Nomads, without any settled country whatever, they were sweeping eastward and southward, down across the shores of the Mediterranean, creating devastation everywhere. They were not only eager for the far-famed riches of Assyria, but looked toward the south, even as far as Egypt.

And the little kingdom of Judah lay directly in their path, as it did during former attempted conquests of Egypt.

Jeremiah once more recalled the vision of the seething caldron, with the strong wind from the north, threatening to pour out the hot contents over the land.

Poor Judah! The country was seething with destructive idolatry within, and the seething hordes of Scythians were endangering its life from without.

Poor Jeremiah! What was there for him to do now? A double calamity was hanging over his people and his beloved country. Even if he stood alone he must try to save them both.

So he began a campaign, the burden of which was two-fold. He undertook to warn the people against the danger which even King Josiah had recognized and of the new danger that was threatening from the north.

He felt sure, as had the other prophets before him, that unless the people turned from their backsliding they would lack the moral courage to withstand the foreign foe and could never gain God's help and protection in fighting their enemies.

Once more he returned to his early methods of pleading with the people. He appealed to them to restore the relationship of children and father that had existed between them and God from the earliest days. He recounted their history from the slavery of Egypt to his own day. He pointed to the wonderful things that God had performed for them, but it all seemed of no avail.

Then he turned to the people with the threats of the danger from the north. He tried to impress them with the idea that God was sending the Scythians as an instrument with which to punish the idolatrous and immoral Judeans.

"Behold a people is coming from the northland,
And a great nation is arousing itself from the uttermost parts of the earth.
They lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel and merciless.
Their din is like the roaring of the sea, and they ride upon horses.
Everyone is arrayed as a man for battle against thee, O daughter of Zion.

"We have heard the report of it, our hands become feeble;
Anguish taketh hold upon us;
Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the highway,
For there is the sword of the enemy, terror on every side.
O, my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and sprinkle thyself with ashes;
Take up mourning as for an only son, bitter lamentation;
For the destroyer shall suddenly come upon us."

From Dan and Mount Ephraim in the north the evil tidings announcing the approach of the Scythians had already been brought to Jerusalem. These savages were approaching Judea like a destructive hot wind and a whirlwind from the wilderness, like a lion gone up from his lair "to lay waste the earth."

"Announce in Jerusalem, 'There they are!'
Robber bands are coming from a far distant land;
Yea, they are raising their cry against the cities of Judah,
Lying in wait in the field over against her on every side,
Because she hath rebelled against me, saith the Lord."

The farmers were deserting their lands and the villagers in the outlying parts of the country their

homes, rushing south to the protecting walls of Jerusalem. The roads were filled with frightened men, women and children. They were not the happy pilgrims who went down to Jerusalem for the great holidays. In their fear they jostled each other and even fought to get ahead of each other. They cared nothing for their fellows. Everyone aimed to reach the capital first.

Jeremiah saw all this, and knew exactly what the result would be when the robber bands came to besiege the city. Already the farthest outlying sections had been ravaged, towns destroyed, fields laid waste, and the inhabitants driven in all directions.

No wonder that Jeremiah was filled with woe. He tried very hard to restrain himself, not to pronounce the doom of his people. But a great force within him urged him to speak:

"My anguish, my anguish! I am pained to the depths of my heart.
My heart is in a tumult within me, I cannot keep silent,
For I have heard the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war!
Destruction succeeds destruction, for the whole land is laid waste.
How long must I see the signal, hear the sound of the trumpet!
For my people are senseless, they know me not,
They are foolish children, and they have no understanding;
They are skilled in doing evil, but they know not how to do right!"

In Jerusalem there were many who believed that they were innocent of any wrong-doing because

they were worshiping God the only way they knew; but what they knew was the same old heathen way. There were many, indeed, who continued their wicked practices secretly even in places where, by King Josiah's orders, the idolatrous shrines and sanctuaries had been destroyed.

What brought pain and sorrow to Jeremiah more than anything else was the fact that the people insisted that they were not sinning, that they were living in accordance with the laws of God.

To them Jeremiah answered:

> "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem and see and know,
> And seek in its open spaces, if ye can find a man,
> If there is any who does right and seeks after the truth!
> And though they say, 'As the Lord liveth,' surely they swear to a falsehood.
> O Lord, do not thine eyes look upon truth?"

Always wanting to be fair and honest in his condemnation of the people, Jeremiah bethought himself that perhaps only the common people who "know not the way of the Lord and the law of their God" were at fault. Therefore he turned himself to the nobles, to the princes of the realm, to the wealthy and exalted, saying to himself, they "know the way of the Lord and the law of their God." But to his great dismay he found that these, too, "have all broken the yoke and burst the bonds" that made them the beloved of God in the days of their righteousness.

"Therefore I am full of the wrath of the Lord; I am
weary of restraining myself.
I must pour it out upon the children in the street
and upon the assembly of young men,
For both the husband and the wife shall be taken,
the aged and him that is advanced in years.
And their houses shall be turned over to others, their
fields to robbers.
For from the least even to the greatest of them, each
greedily robs,
And from the prophet even to the priest, each deals
deceitfully.
They heal the hurt of my people as though it were
slight,
Saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace."

This condition was reason enough for Jeremiah to point out, regretfully,

"Thy conduct and thy acts have procured these things
for thee!
This is the cause of thy calamity; verily it is bitter,
for it toucheth thy heart."

Yet hopefully he pleaded,

"Cleanse thy heart, O Jerusalem, from wickedness,
that thou mayest be delivered.
How long shall thy evil thoughts stay within thee?"

This preaching, pleading, threatening, in which Jeremiah was assisted greatly by Zephaniah, King Josiah's teacher, and the little crowd of men, "the remnant" of Isaiah's days, whom Hilkiah had gathered about him, now known as the Prophetic Party, was not a matter of days or months, but of years.

Josiah, standing practically single-handed among the nobles and the Court Party, the legacy from his grandfather Manasseh, continued his reforms to the best of his ability.

At last the work was having its effect. The constant hammering away began to tell. Great progress was actually being made in the religious and moral awakening of the people.

And now came the joyous news that Psammetich I., Pharaoh of Egypt, had sent an embassy to meet the invading Scythians in the north, before they approached Egyptian territory; that he bought the savages off by means of gifts and large sums of money; that the danger of an invasion of Egypt, and therefore of Judah, was past.

The Prophetic Party pointed to the sparing of Judah from the ravages of the Scythian scourge as God's way of showing his approval, not alone of the king's outward reforms, but of the people's inner awakening to lives of righteousness.

And soon after, the most important event in the whole history of Israel up to that time, an event that had a lasting influence, not alone upon the Jews but upon the whole world, occurred in the temple in Jerusalem.

Chapter V.

The Great Discovery.

The great deliverance from the Scythian invasion strengthened Josiah and the Prophetic Party in their work of reform. They felt that their God had spared them because much of the idolatrous worship had already been stopped in Jerusalem and many of the pagan shrines destroyed.

The king also determined to repair and rebuild certain parts of the Temple. The great building that Solomon erected now looked like a hodge-podge of architecture. No repairs whatever had been made on it since the days of King Joash, about two hundred years before, while many additions in the interior and in the courts had been made by Ahaz and Manasseh.

Josiah determined to clear out everything foreign connected with the Temple; inside and out he was going to restore it as it was in the days of Solomon, and to beautify it. Walls were cracked and foundations had settled at different points. The alterations and repairs planned, accordingly, were very extensive and were to be done immediately.

But the Temple treasury and the coffers of the royal house were empty. The enormous tributes that the predecessors of Josiah were forced to pay to Assyria had greatly reduced the financial resources of both king and Temple.

Josiah, therefore, introduced a new method of collecting funds for the proposed work. He placed great collection boxes at the Temple gates. All who visited Jerusalem and the Temple were expected to make some contribution. Money came in fast, especially when, under the supervision of Hilkiah, the masons and the artisans and the workmen of all kinds had actually started operations.

In addition, Josiah caused collections to be made for this purpose all through his kingdom, including the old kingdom of Israel, where a remnant of the people still remained. With this money, the hewn stone and the timber necessary for the repairs were bought and the workmen paid.

It is recorded that everyone did his work faithfully and efficiently and that the building, for that reason, was being restored in exceptionally quick time.

On a certain day, in the year 621, Josiah sent Shaphan, his minister of foreign affairs, to the Temple to empty the collection boxes and to report back to him on the progress of the repairs.

When Shaphan came to the Temple, Hilkiah approached him carrying a parchment scroll, with the remarkable statement, "I have found the Book of the Law in the House of God;" and Hilkiah handed the book to Shaphan.

Being questioned, Hilkiah explained that the book was discovered in one of the corner-stones of the Temple. It had probably been placed there by King Solomon himself, he explained, at the time when the Temple was built. But after Solomon's

death, during the constant war between Israel and Judah and the inroads that idolatry had made in both countries, the real, genuine "Book of the Law" that was to have been the basis for government, the constitution of both Israel and Judah, had evidently been lost sight of and forgotten. Now, by the merest accident, it was found again.

When Shaphan glanced through it he immediately saw what a wonderful discovery had been made. So he took the book to the king. He reported to Josiah first, that the money was collected, material paid for and workmen satisfied; then, that the King's orders regarding the repairs of the Temple had been faithfully carried out; finally, that Hilkiah had discovered a book and that he had delivered it to him. The king, having heard the whole story of the discovery, ordered Shaphan to read the book to him, aloud.

What Shaphan read amazed Josiah and the few advisers whom he had called in to listen to the reading. Everything in it seemed to be the exact opposite of conditions as they existed in Judah. The laws for sacrifices and ceremonies in the Temple; the statutes regarding the priesthood in the Temple; the observances of the holidays; the commandments regarding duties of officers of the law and the administration of justice; the humane laws between man and man, all were different from, actually opposed to, the practice of priest, judge and people in Josiah's entire kingdom.

During the reading of the book Josiah recognized how little real headway his reforms thus far had made. When he heard Shaphan read:

> "The judges shall judge the people with righteous judgment. Thou shalt not pervert justice; thou shalt not respect persons; neither shalt thou take a bribe, for a bribe blindeth the eyes of the wise and perverteth the words of the righteous. Justice and only justice shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee",

he understood how far from this ideal his people had strayed.

When he heard the great declaration of God's unity,

> "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might",

he understood how little he had accomplished throughout his reign, in attempted suppression of the worship of many gods.

When he heard the scribe read aloud that it is God's will to be worshiped only in that "place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there," he determined, more than ever before, to pull down every shrine and pagan sanctuary and to center the worship of the Lord in the Temple in Jerusalem alone.

At the end of the book, Shaphan read a series of wonderful blessings that were promised king and people, if they would live in accordance with the commandments contained in the Book of the Law—and Josiah saw visions of peace and prosperity for

his kingdom. But the reading of the last lines cast a heavy gloom upon the little party, for the book concluded with the enumeration of a series of evils upon evils that would surely befall king and people should they not live in accordance with these commandments:

> "All these curses shall come upon thee and follow thee and overtake thee until thou art destroyed, because thou hast not hearkened unto the Lord thy God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded thee."

Upon hearing this very dramatic conclusion, Josiah came down from his throne and bowed himself to the ground. He rent his clothes and wept aloud, as if he were mourning for one who had died and whom he had loved best of all in the world.

Then, restraining himself and collecting all his strength, he turned to Shaphan and Hilkiah and the others, who had been listening to the reading, and said:

> "Go ye, inquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel and Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do according unto all that is written in this book."

Leaving the King's presence, Hilkiah and his companions held a short council to determine what to do next. The Book of the Law was so extraordinary that they needed the wisdom of some sage to explain to them how to proceed.

Those of the Prophetic Party understood well enough what this book was. They considered that

it was a copy of the law which Moses was ordered to "put by the side of the Ark" and which Solomon probably placed in the corner-stone of the Temple when he built it. They who had been trained by the descendants of the little party of faithful Judeans whom Isaiah had gathered about him, knew that this law had been continually violated since the days of Hezekiah and practically forgotten. Therefore they wanted someone who was an authority, one who would be trusted by all the people, to interpret this book and to declare it to be the genuine Law of Moses.

First, someone suggested that Jeremiah be called in to interpret the book, but Hilkiah objected on the ground that Jeremiah was still a young man and that his opinion probably would not be heeded by all the people. Shaphan then suggested that the book be taken to Huldah, the Prophetess, a wise and aged mother in Israel, then living in Jerusalem.

This suggestion was agreeable to all. With Hilkiah as leader of the delegation, they came to Huldah, bringing the request from the King. Her face lighted up benignly when she had read the book, but when she thought of the reply she had to send back, her brows knitted and wrinkles of care and pain showed in her face. Returning the scroll to Shaphan, Huldah said:

> "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Tell ye the man that sent you unto me: Thus saith the Lord, 'Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah. Because they have forsaken me, and

> have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore is my wrath poured out upon this place and it shall not be quenched.'
>
> "But unto the King of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him: 'Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: As touching the words which thou hast heard, because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place and against the inhabitants thereof, and hast humbled thyself before me and hast rent thy clothes and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place and upon the inhabitants thereof.' "

The good prophetess knew that what happens to individuals must happen to whole nations. Here was a people that had been adding evil to evil and transgression to transgression for many generations. Just as a person who keeps on sinning and sinning, without reforming in his heart and in his deeds, arrives at a time when, no matter how anxious he is to turn from his evil ways, it is too late and he must finally pay the penalty for his misspent life, so this nation of Judah, into the very heart of which the cancer of wrongdoing had long been eating, could not, at this late date, escape its final destruction.

But it is different, as the Prophetess Huldah expressed it, with individuals who turn from their evil paths while they are young, or who, like Josiah, attempt to do the right thing in the very midst of evil. Therefore, she could send back the message to the king, that he, because of the tenderness of his heart, because of his humility before God, because of his unquestioned effort to act in accordance with

God's commandments, would return unto the God who sent him here before the evil days were to come upon the land, before the doom that awaited his people would encompass them.

The king had been anxiously awaiting the return of his messengers, when they arrived at the palace from the house of the Prophetess. They were quickly ushered into the throne room.

It was with great hesitation that Hilkiah finally made up his mind to report the words of the prophetess, exactly as she had spoken them. When the priest had finished, a deep, deathlike silence hung over the room, as if some catastrophe were impending.

Josiah turned away from the little group, rested his arm heavily upon the throne and leaned his head upon it. Hilkiah, Shaphan and the others saw and felt the emotion that surged through the young king and caused his whole frame to tremble. A soft, gentle sound escaped him, as if he were weeping.

Suddenly, however, Josiah's attitude changed. He ran the back of his hand over his eyes, straightened up and faced his friends. He was calm, composed, determined. He had concluded that he, himself, was the least to be considered in this matter. He needed advice from more older and more experienced men. Consequently, before the counselors present left him, Josiah ordered Shaphan to call an assembly of the elders of the entire people to meet in Jerusalem before the coming Passover.

Chapter VI.

A New Covenant.

Josiah was determined not to give up so easily. He would not admit to himself that his country and his people were beyond hope. He figured that perhaps the prophetess had exaggerated purposely in order to recall the people to their duty to their God and to the country, more quickly and more conscientiously.

He was not at all happy over the fact that he himself would escape the threatened destruction of his people. What he wanted was to discover some possible way, and to make every attempt, to save all his people.

At the council of the Elders, as a first step, he suggested that the coming Passover be celebrated faithfully in accordance with the commandments in the rediscovered law book.

Messengers were therefore sent throughout Judah, and even up into Israel, to announce a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover, by order of the king and the Elders.

Great and happy throngs came to the Capital for the festival. It was a multitude of people far different in mien and behavior from that same multitude that had rushed to the protection of the fortified city when the Scythian invaders had threatened the country a few years before.

Now, when the Passover eve, that is the fourteenth day of the first month, was at hand, it was found that the great majority of the people did not bring with them the prescribed sacrifices, either because they did not know of the custom or because they were too poor.

Such a condition, however, did not dismay Josiah and his officers. He, himself, out of his own treasury, distributed the means for making the sacrifices to over thirty-three thousand people. Hilkiah and the heads of the Temple service, out of their own means, did the same for the Priests and the Levites. So that everyone present in Jerusalem that day observed the Passover properly and happily.

On the following morning, that is, on the first day of the festival, an assembly of all the people present, both great and small, was called in the Temple courts.

The King and his advisers sat on a platform especially erected for the purpose. When order was secured, the King arose and stood in his place and "read of the words of the Book of the Covenant that was found in the House of God, before all the people."

The impression made upon the assembly was wonderful. As Josiah proceeded with his reading the murmurs and low exclamations of surprise changed into a deep and impressive silence that was not broken even when the King had finished and had laid aside the Book of the Law.

Reverently and with bowed head, Josiah raised a prayer unto God:

"Look down from Thy holy habitation, from heaven, O Lord, and bless Thy people Israel."

And with one voice the whole assembly answered, softly:

"Amen, Oh Lord, Amen."

Then Josiah addressed the people. He pleaded with all the fervor and sincerity of his soul for them to re-establish, on that day, the ancient covenant between them and their God. This they did with a great shout of acclamation. Josiah continued:

"This day the Lord thy God commandeth thee to do these statutes and ordinances; thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thy heart, and with all thy soul. Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and that thou wouldest walk in his ways, and keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his ordinances, and hearken unto his voice; and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be a people for his own possession, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments; and to make thee high above all nations that he hath made in praise, and in name, and in honor; and that thou mayest be a holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken."

When the King had finished and sat down, a great murmur welled up from the assembled people, until it grew into one great shout from the multitude:

"We have heard and shall do accordingly."

Thus the people of Judah and Israel once more took upon themselves the duty and burden to be a holy people unto the Lord their God, as they had done at Sinai in the days of Moses.

There was one man in the assembly, however, who was not entirely carried away by the enthusiasm of

the moment. It was Jeremiah. He knew well enough how a people, excited by a new and novel situation, would make promises which perhaps later they would be disinclined to keep. The mere acceptance of the covenant did not already mean the carrying out of its statutes in their daily life.

Therefore, Jeremiah arose in the midst of the assembly, and, before the people were dispersed, struck one note of warning:

> "Cursed be the man that heareth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace, saying, 'Obey my voice, and do them according to all which I command you; so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God; that I may establish the oath which I sware unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day.'"

In conclusion, Jeremiah bowed his head and expressed the hope of the realization of the new covenant with the words:

> "Amen, Oh Lord."

And all the assembly once more responded:

> "Amen, Oh Lord."

Great feasting and rejoicing throughout the entire city by all the people followed during the whole festival. It was the greatest Passover in the history of Judah and Jerusalem, and of it is recorded:

> "And the children of Israel that were present kept the Passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. And there was no Passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the

> prophet; neither did any of the kings of Israel keep such a Passover as Josiah kept, and the priests and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this Passover kept."

When the festival and the celebration were over, the spirit thereof did not die with the departure of the people from Jerusalem to their homes in all parts of the country. Josiah went to work in earnest to accomplish his share of the keeping of the new covenant. He dismissed every idolatrous priest in the land and destroyed every vestige of their worship in Jerusalem, in every town and village and on every high place.

Up in Israel he carried on this work under his personal direction, and at Bethel, with his own hands, he destroyed the altar erected by Jereboam I. at the time of the division of the kingdom.

It was while in northern Israel, where he ordered the dead bones of the idolatrous priests to be burned upon the very altars at which they worshiped, that Josiah espied two sepulchers, of a type that he had not met before. They were so unlike the sepulchers of the idolators that he marked them especially and talked about them. One of the monuments, he was told, "is the sepulcher of the Man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar at Bethel;" and when he found that the other ancient monument was the last bed on earth of "the Prophet that came out of Samaria," he ordered that neither one should be

touched. The memory of those early prophets was sacred and hallowed to the king.

Within a few years, all this work undertaken by Josiah was accomplished. Genuine love of God and genuine living in accordance with His commandments seemed to have been restored everywhere among the people. In addition, the political changes that were taking place in Assyria, Babylonia and Egypt, left Josiah entirely at peace to work out the destinv of his own people and kingdom.

In the year 608, however, in the thirty-ninth year of Josiah's reign, he entered upon a political campaign that proved to be the first and greatest mistake of his life and resulted not alone in his death, but in a great religious and moral decline that eventually led to the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah.

Chapter VII.

To the Fore Again.

The mystery of the Scythian invasion of Asia has not yet been clearly solved. The results of that invasion, however, shook thrones and shattered kingdoms and changed the face of the then known civilized world.

Assyria was the greatest sufferer, for the Scythian ravages had so weakened the great empire that it never recovered. Incidentally, this same cause re-awakened the spirit of conquest in the Medes, led to the re-establishment of the independent Babylonian kingdom and brought about, indirectly and unnecessarily, the death of the good King Josiah.

During the last years of Ashurbanipal's long and brilliant reign over Assyria, the Medes, under their king, Phraortes, turned the tables on Assyria and invaded the empire. Ashurbanipal's army defeated the ambitious Mede and drove him back into his own territory. But his son and successor, Cyaxerxes, having made certain changes in the organization of the Median army, again invaded Assyria and actually besieged Nineveh.

At the same time the Scythians began to swarm over Media, and Cyaxerxes was forced to return to his own country and defend it.

Cyaxerxes, being a wise as well as a great king, managed to buy off the barbarian Scythians and

later actually trained them for service in his army, both as teachers of archery and as mercenaries.

In the meantime, the Assyrian successor of Ashurbanipal made the mistake that cost him his life and his empire. He appointed Nabopolassar, a Chaldean of ancient lineage and of enthusiastic patriotism for his age-old country. Nabopolassar immediately entered into an alliance with Cyaxerxes that had for its purpose the overthrow of Nineveh and the establishment of Babylonia as an independent state.

Nabopolassar declared himself king of Babylonia, to the great dismay of the Assyrian court. To seal his alliance with the Medes, a marriage was arranged between Amytis, Cyaxerxes' daughter, and Nebuchadrezzar, his son and Crown Prince.

Nineveh was attacked at the same time by the Babylonians and Medians in the year 608. The great capital was besieged for two years. So fierce was the vengeance wrought upon the city and its inhabitants by the united armies that when the capture was finally made both were completely blotted out. For many centuries not even the location of Nineveh could be found.

This occurred in the year 606. The end of Nineveh brought to a close the history of the great Assyrian power that had ruled so masterfully over the then known entire world. It also brought about a situation that had its direct effect upon the beginning of the end of the Kingdom of Judah.

In Egypt history was in the making. Psammetich I, a Libyan soldier, recognizing in the

crumbling of Assyrian power his own opportunity, made himself master of the country and established a new dynasty in Egypt. His son and successor, Pharaoh Necho, grasped the chance given him by Nabopolassar's attack on Nineveh to win back the provinces along the Mediterranean, that had been Egyptian before they were conquered by Assyria.

Without further ado, therefore, Necho, with a great army, started north, to conquer all of Assyria that he could and add it to his own Empire. This meant an invasion of Judah.

King Josiah was by no means ready to sit still and fall helplessly from the frying pan into the fire, as it were. Once entirely free from Assyria, he intended to maintain his independence. At least, he was not going to allow Pharaoh Necho to slip the noose around his neck without a struggle. Josiah, therefore, organized his armies and went out to meet Necho. This was when the campaign against Nineveh began.

To the Pharaoh's great surprise, when he reached the plain of Megiddo, he was confronted by Josiah. Necho sent him word that he had no quarrel with Judah whatever; but Josiah could see nothing in the future but the sovereignty of Egypt over his dominions and was determined to retain his independence at all costs. So, the war was on.

It did not last long, however. It seems that not even a single pitched battle was fought. Josiah was picked off by a Libyan archer in the very first skirmish and wounded mortally, to the dismay of his entire army.

His old and devoted servant, Ebed-melech, was with the king in his chariot. The faithful Ethiopian carried the wounded Josiah from the royal chariot to another one. Protected by a detachment of the body guard, as if in mockery, Josiah was taken back to Jerusalem, dying. Before he reached the capital he was dead, and Necho declared himself master over Judah without the least resistance. He made it, at once, an Egyptian province.

The mourning for the dead King in Jerusalem and Judah was sincere and widespread. It is recorded that many odes by the poets and musicians of that day were written in his memory and that Jeremiah lamented for his friend in accents more woeful than did David for Jonathan. Ebed-melech hung around the sepulcher of his beloved master for many days. It was months before he returned to the palace to resume his duties.

> "Like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him."

To indicate the force and power of Josiah's life with the people of Judah, and the genuine value in their own lives of the late king's reforms, the people at large passed over Eliakim, Josiah's eldest son, and raised his second son, Jehoahaz, to the throne of Judah.

Eliakim was a weakling, who loved ease and luxury above everything else. The people feared that he would not continue the life and work of his

father. Jehoahaz, on the other hand, was a true son of his father, and would have made a splendid successor to the throne of Josiah, had not Pharaoh Necho interfered with the will of the people of Judah.

In the third month of the young king's reign (he was only twenty-three years old) Necho ordered him to appear before him at Riblah, on the Orontes. Arrived there, Jehoahaz was immediately thrown into chains and sent a prisoner to Egypt.

Necho then proclaimed Eliakim King of Judah and to show his complete mastery over king, land and people, he changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim.

The mourning in Jerusalem and Judah was now twofold. The people wept for their beloved king who was dead and for his beloved son who was a prisoner beyond hope.

A few men like Hilkiah and Jeremiah, and the others of the Prophetic Party, saw in Jehoahaz's successor the coming of more evil days for Judah. To those who hoped that there might again be a political change and that Jehoahaz would return from Egypt, to reign in his father's stead, Jeremiah held out no hope:

"Weep not for him who is dead, nor wail for him; weep rather for him who is gone, for he shall not return, and never again shall he see the land of his birth. For thus saith the Lord, concerning Shallum (Jehoahaz), the son of Josiah, who was king instead of Josiah his father, who went forth from this place: 'He shall not return thither again, but in the place whither they have led him away captive he shall die, and this land shall not see him again.'"

Soon after Jehoiakim came to the throne, word came from Egypt that Jehoahaz had died. It was then that Jeremiah, who with Shaphan and Hilkiah had quietly aided the king in his policy of reform, but had retired to his home in Anathoth when these reforms began to bear fruit, heard again the call to go out and prophesy to the people of Judah. Danger was threatening from the throne and this danger brought Jeremiah out of his seclusion, to the fore again.

Chapter VIII.

The Shadow of a King.

Pharaoh Necho's ambitions were short-lived.

The child's-play conquest of Judah was not to be repeated in dealing with the conquerors of Nineveh.

Nebuchadrezzar really had no thought of extending the sway of his re-born Babylonia to Egypt; but he would not countenance for a moment Necho's encroachment upon Assyrian territory.

In dividing up the Assyrian Empire, Cyaxerxes was perfectly satisfied with the absolute independence of Media and such Assyrian possessions as adjoined his country. The rest, to the west and south, including ancient Syria and Judah, was apportioned to his son-in-law. There was no quarrel about the division.

Syria and Judah being his, Nebuchadrezzar swore by all his gods that Necho should be made to suffer for his audacity.

Necho encamped at Riblah, after the victory over Josiah. Riblah, situated in the broad valley between the Lebanon and Hermon ranges, was destined to be the scene of several tragedies in Judean history. It was here that Necho awaited the outcome of the struggle at Nineveh.

He did not have long to wait. Nineveh gasped her last in the year 606. Nebuchadrezzar left his father-in-law to complete the destruction of the glory

of Assyria, and, flushed with victory, marched at once against the Egyptian invader.

Necho was prepared for this. He broke camp at Riblah and proceeded to meet Nebuchadrezzar. The Babylonian and Egyptian armies faced each other at Carchemish by the Euphrates, in 605; and the result once more cast Judah into the political balance.

In the meantime, Jeremiah was forced back to his labors by the conditions at Jerusalem. Necho knew what he wanted when he substituted Jehoiakim for Jehoahaz on the throne of Judah. Jehoiakim was weak, pliable, incapable of big things. Jeremiah knew that, too. Therefore, he had to go to work again.

Jeremiah raised no false hopes, based on anything Jehoiakim would do for himself or for Judah. Even while Josiah lived, the crown prince showed the type of man he was. Instead of applying himself to the work of succeeding to the throne, he spent his time in riotous pleasure, and his father's money in lavish extravagance.

As crown prince, he built himself a sumptuous new palace. Unlike Josiah, when the Temple was repaired, Jehoiakim did not pay fair wages, and oppressed his artisans and mechanics. When he sat in judgment, he did not judge righteously.

Therefore, at Josiah's unexpected death, Jeremiah approved the action of the people in raising the unfortunate Jehoahaz to the throne. Necho's substitution of Jehoiakim filled the prophet with alarm. The happy years of Josiah's reign vanished like a mist; and, with a heart that was heavy-laden, Jere-

miah left Anathoth, where he had been living quietly with his relatives and friends, and went down to the turmoil in Jerusalem.

Satisfying himself that he had not exaggerated the situation in the capital, and, seeing now that the calamity of Josiah's death was more far-reaching than he had at first supposed, Jeremiah addressed himself to Jehoiakim with the following warning:

"Woe to him who buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by injustice;
Who causeth his neighbor to labor without wages, and giveth him not his pay;
Who saith, 'I will build me a vast palace with spacious chambers;
Provided with deep-cut windows, ceiled with cedar and painted with vermillion.'
Dost thou call thyself king because thou excellest in cedar?
Thy father—did he not eat and drink and execute law and justice?
He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well.
'Was not this to know me?' saith the Lord.
But thine eyes and heart are bent only on thy dishonest gain,
And on the shedding of innocent blood and on oppression and violence!"

Nor did Jeremiah hesitate to point out that such a state of affairs could not exist long and that such a king could not reign long over Israel.

He even foretold the fate of Jehoiakim. He knew that the political situation, as it would develop when Nineveh was conquered, would once more embroil Judah. Jehoiakim, he was sure, could not stand the test.

Therefore, he could see nothing but the fall and untimely death of Jehoiakim, and he added, "They

shall not lament over him, saying one to another, 'Oh, my brother!' or 'Oh, my sister!' They shall not wail for him, saying, 'Oh, Lord!' or 'Oh, his glory!' but shall be glad when he is 'buried as an ass is buried, drawn out and cast forth.' "

On that very day came the news of the Battle of Carchemish. It was one of the epoch-making struggles of ancient history. Victory perched proudly on the banner of Nebuchadrezzar and Necho was utterly routed, fleeing toward Egypt, the Babylonians in hot pursuit.

Within that very year all signs of Egyptian rule in Syria and Palestine were wiped out. "The king of Babylon had taken from the brook of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt." Judah became a Babylonian province and Jehoiakim but the shadow of a king.

Chapter IX.

The Temple of the Lord.

Nebuchadrezzar had taken up his headquarters where Pharaoh-Necho had encamped at Riblah, and there received the homage of the little Syrian and Palestinian states that he had wrested from Egypt.

To Jeremiah's great surprise, Jehoiakim sent a secret embassy to Nebuchadrezzar vowing allegiance to Babylon.

Jehoiakim's submission pleased Jeremiah. He saw in it a splendid opportunity for Judah. All that was needed now was to keep the people in the path of right. Their future, he felt, could be worked out well enough as long as the country was at peace, free from the ravages of war.

But here Jeremiah was met by a new difficulty. Josiah's reformation, followed by his death and the quick changes in the country's political fortunes, had not worked out very satisfactorily. People began to doubt the wisdom of the whole proceeding.

In the first place, some said that God was displeased at Josiah's overriding the traditional forms of worship. The opportunity for God to show that displeasure was at Megiddo, and, therefore, Josiah lost his life there. All the people, it was plain, had not yet arrived at the conception of God held by a Jeremiah or Josiah.

Again, there were others who fell back into the old reasoning that the gods of the other nations were mightier than Judah's God, and, therefore, they fell back into the old idolatrous ways. They were merely awaiting the opportunity to worship the other gods publicly as some of them were already doing privately.

Then, again, there were many who believed that the new Book of the Law and the new order of things prohibiting sacrifices in any place except the Temple in Jerusalem, did not permit of enough sacrificing to God, and, therefore, was He again visiting the land with the rod of Egypt and Babylonia.

And, opposing all these, Jeremiah and his followers were positive in their hearts and souls that sacrifices were by no means the all-important feature of the worship of God, but, as Jeremiah had reminded the people on the day of the Great Passover, God asked them only to obey His voice and to live in accordance with the moral law that He had commanded them.

"So shall ye be my people, and I will be your God; that I may establish the oath which I sware unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey."

King Jehoiakim had no interest whatever in these differing religious opinions among the people.

As long as he could pay his tribute to Nebuchadrezzar and live luxuriously and voluptuously in his newly built palace, he cared not further. Religiously and morally he permitted things to take their own course, as if morals and religion had no part to play in the strength and safety of his people and in their national welfare.

Jeremiah was now convinced that it was his duty once more to take up the brave fight for God and His law. The opportunity came during the Feast of the Ingathering, in the year 604.

Many thousands had come from all parts of the country to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival. All brought with them many heads of cattle and bags of grain and flour for the prescribed sacrifices.

They were a happy company. When the Temple came into view, rising majestically in the distance, they shouted to each other, "The Temple of the Lord! The Temple of the Lord!" out of sheer joy in beholding the sacred structure that meant so much to them.

"The Temple of the Lord! The Temple of the Lord!" they cried, and pointed to the magnificent edifice which some of them had never seen before.

Jeremiah listened to these joyous shouts and observed sorrowfully the self-satisfaction of those who had come to offer their sacrifices. He was much alone these days. His parents had been dead some years and a new Priest was in charge of the Temple. Shaphan and all Josiah's old counsellors were either gone to their reward or had been dismissed from service by Jehoiakim. Shaphan's two sons, Ahikam and Gemariah, were indeed high in the counsels of the king, but they bothered little about Jeremiah and his teachings.

So Jeremiah stood alone, on the first day of the festival, at the Temple gates. A multitude of people passed him, taking their turn at bringing their offerings. From within the Temple he heard the sounds of cattle being slaughtered and smelt the odor of

burning flesh. The noise deafened him; the odors choked him. Here were king, priest and people leading unrighteous lives and believing that this wholesale slaughtering and burning was what God demanded of them! Here were elaborate form and ritual, but no justice and love!

Jeremiah fairly gasped for breath when the full meaning of this came to him. Turning upon a great crowd that was jammed at the gates, waiting their turn to enter the Temple, he cried:

"Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel:

"'Add your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat ye flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices.

"'But this thing I commanded them, saying: Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the way that I command you that it may be well with you.

"'Yet they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart. This is the nation that hath not hearkened to the voice of the Lord their God, nor received instruction. Truth is perished and is cut off from their mouth.'"

What an amazing outburst! God did not command them concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices! The man is ridiculous!

Religious discussions and controversies had often taken place in the Temple courts. Here was the Forum of the People, in fact, and several men who had often proclaimed themselves as prophets, speaking the word of God, joined issue with Jeremiah, whom they now recognized.

"Here is the Temple—the Temple of the Lord," they exclaimed. "What was it built for, if not for

sacrifices?" they wanted to know. "What other way is there for men to worship God than to bring their offerings to him?"

Jeremiah replied that sacrifices were instituted by men, by the priesthood, not by God, and continued, making plain once for all his understanding of the way God wanted men to show their religion:

"Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, 'The Temple of the Lord! The Temple of the Lord! The Temple of the Lord!

"'For, if you really amend your ways and your deeds, if ye faithfully execute justice between a man and his neighbor, if ye oppress not the resident alien, the fatherless and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, and do not go after other gods to your hurt; then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, forever and ever.'"

Here was a very amazing accusation! What does he mean by saying that the people are trusting in "lying words?" Jeremiah insisted:

"But now ye *are* trusting in lying words that cannot profit."

Then he hastened to explain fully and without reserve:

"Will ye steal, murder and commit adultery; swear falsely and offer sacrifices to Baal, and go after other gods whom ye have not known, and then come and stand before Me in this House which is called after My name and say 'We are free to do all these abominations?'

"Is this, My house, which is called by my name, a den of robbers in your eyes?

"Behold I, indeed, have seen it, saith the Lord."

"I sat alone because of thy hand."—Jeremiah XV, 17.

The crowds stood there, mouths agape. They had never heard anything so outspoken and fearless before. Several so-called prophets were prepared to go on with the argument, but a number of assistant priests, who were marshalling the people with their sacrificial offerings into the Temple in proper order and to their appointed places, put a halt to the debate.

Word had come from the interior of the Temple that the chief priests were waiting for the sacrifices. The assistants wanted the people to move on. So it was arranged that, on the day following, Jeremiah should meet a chosen few of the Jerusalem prophets to discuss their differences of opinion publicly, in the Temple courts.

Jeremiah's acceptance of this challenge nearly cost him his life.

Chapter X.

A Narrow Escape.

The issue was squarely drawn.

Either the Temple Prophets were the true spokesmen of the God of Judah and Jeremiah was an impostor, or Jeremiah spoke the truth that had been "cut off from their mouth" and the Temple Prophets were feeding the people on "lying words."

A great concourse of citizens of Jerusalem and pilgrims to the city gathered for the debate. Jeremiah, much older looking than his years, was the center of attraction. He was tall and erect. His face was somewhat drawn and showed wrinkles of worriment. He was dressed in an unadorned brown mantle that singled him out among the holiday-attired priests and prophets with whom he was conversing.

Evidently this was to be a friendly argument, without ill-feeling on either side.

Jeremiah was the first to speak. As soon as he began it was plain to be seen that his worry was not fear of the arguments with which his opponents were about to attack him, but that it was deeper-seated. He started by informing his hearers that he was well acquainted with the things that were being preached in Jerusalem as the word of God.

"I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright. No man repenteth him of his wickedness, saying, 'What have I done?' Everyone turneth to his course as a horse that rusheth headlong into battle.

"Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed time; the turtle dove and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the law of the Lord."

"Is that so?" queried one of the Jerusalem prophets, with a sneer. In his reply, he pointed out that both the laws of the religion and the laws of the State were known to the priests and prophets, in whose charge were the Temple and the government, and were obeyed by them and the people. With sweeping gestures he emphasized the prosperity of the people and the peace of the country. "Thou art the disturber of the peace," he concluded hotly. "Leave the Temple and the State to the wise men, the scribes, the priests and prophets in Jerusalem, and all will be well."

"The same kind of argument," thought Jeremiah, as he listened attentively to the speaker. "They always fail to grasp the vital things that God demands of them." In his rejoinder, therefore, Jeremiah came back forcibly:

"How do ye say, 'We are wise and the law of the Lord is with us!' But, behold, the false pen of the scribes hath made falsehood of it. The wise men are put to shame. Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord.

"And what manner of wisdom is in them? Every one, from the least even unto the greatest, is given to covetousness; from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

"And they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace."

Instantly there came to Jeremiah's mind the story of the Kingdom of Israel with its deceitful priests and false prophets, who, at Bethel and Shiloh, taught and preached untruths about God—and the sad end of them all. They, too, had thought everything was well with them and their sanctuary and the peace of the land. So Jeremiah continued:

"Then go now to my sanctuary which is in Shiloh, where I caused my name to dwell at first and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel.

"And now because ye have done all these deeds, and although I spoke to you insistently, ye have not heeded, and although I called you, ye have not answered, therefore I will do to the house, which ye call by My name, in which ye trust, and to the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh."

This speech started several commotions in different parts of the crowd. From the extreme edge, to the right of the speakers, one man began to come forward, shouting:

"Blasphemy!"

The cry was taken up all around him. From various directions men, throwing their arms in the air and yelling at the top of their voices, made their way with difficulty toward the speakers, crying:

"Blasphemy! Blasphemy!!"

Jeremiah, at first, could not understand the commotion. What had he said, what had he done, that was blasphemous? Then, as the cry became general and the surging mob became threatening, the thought came to him that the people had been taught by the priests and prophets in Jerusalem that the Temple was inviolable, that no matter what the political fortunes of Judah might be, God would never permit

"the House which is called by His name" to be destroyed.

Now Jeremiah understood and he was helpless. His simile of the sanctuary at Shiloh suggested the destruction and ruin of the Temple in Jerusalem—and that was blasphemy.

He did not know, however, that his opponents had purposely planted men in various sections of the assembly to wait and watch for any blasphemous hint in his argument and to raise the cry against him.

"Blasphemy! Blasphemy!" The cry was now general. And the leader who started it, when he came within reach of Jeremiah, grasped his mantle and shouted:

"You must die!"

The Temple guard rushed to the prophet's assisttance. Blasphemy was punishable by death, but the punishment must come in the regular, legal way and not by the hands of the mob.

Under protection of the guard, therefore, Jeremiah was led to the new gate, built by King Josiah, where the princes sat as judges. At his heels was the threatening, gesticulating crowd, goaded on by Jeremiah's enemies, demanding his life.

The trial was opened without delay. Here were thousands of witnesses who had heard the man and there seemed little hope for him to escape being stoned to death. One of the prophets opened the case for the prosecution, addressing himself to the judges:

"This man is worthy of death; for he hath prophesied against this city in the name of God, saying, 'This house shall be like Shiloh. This city shall be deserted, without an inhabitant.'"

Turning dramatically to the crowd, he swept his arm over their heads, adding for the purpose of affirmation:

"As ye have heard with your ears."

"Aye, aye," many responded.

"Blasphemy! Blasphemy!" shouted others.

And still others demanded, "He must die! He must die!"

When a semblance of quiet was restored, Jeremiah stepped forward from between the two guards who had him in charge, faced the accusing people, and said, very calmly and humbly:

"It was the Lord who sent me to prophesy against this Temple and against this city all the words that you have heard."

"Bah!" jeered the leaders of the opposition, and many took up the signal and joined in the jeering. Jeremiah did not permit the jeers to interrupt him:

"Now therefore reform your ways and your acts and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent of the evil that he has pronounced upon you."

"Hear him! Hear him!" arose from all directions. "He blasphemes! He blasphemes!" Jeremiah paid no attention to these outcries, but turned to the judges and concluded his defense:

"But as for me, see, I am in your hand; do with me as appears to you to be good and right.

"Only be assured that, if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and upon its inhabitants, for verily the Lord hath sent me to you to speak all these things in your ears."

Jeremiah ceased. He walked back to his place between the two guards to await his sentence. The mob was rather taken by surprise at the prisoner's defense. He made no arguments for release, no pleas for his life, but stated his belief in his work and his faith in God, trusting for the rest in the justness of his cause.

From out among the princes arose Ahikam, the eldest son of Shaphan, who was the Royal Scribe for Jehoiakim, as his father had been for Josiah. Ahikam and Jeremiah had been close friends as young men, even as their fathers had been all their lives. Recently, however, they had not seen much of each other. Jeremiah was busy about his business and Ahikam was permanently stationed in Jerusalem, at the palace.

Jeremiah hardly recognized Ahikam when he began to address the judges. His interest in the speaker was greatly stirred, however, when he heard Ahikam say that he had no apology to offer for the position he was taking, nor for his friendship and love for the man who was accused of the crime of blasphemy. He said that he believed that his and Jeremiah's fathers were of the greatest service to King Josiah in the prosperity that attended his reign, and that, though the priests and prophets of Jerusalem might not understand it, Jeremiah wanted the peace and prosperity of the nation and of the capital, not their doom.

Then, rising to a pitch of oratorical flight, he cried:

"This man is not worthy of death, for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God."

Up jumped Pashhur, the chief officer of the Temple, and told the story of Uriah, the son of Shemaiah, who also had prophesied in the Temple in the name of God. Pashhur continued:

"And he prophesied against the city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah; and when Jehoiakim, the king, with all his mighty men and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; but when Uriah heard it, he was afraid, and fled and went into Egypt.

"And Jehoiakim, the king, sent men into Egypt, and they fetched forth Uriah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim, the king, who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people."

But Ahikam, who, like his father, was acquainted with the history of his people, arose and answered Pashhur:

"Micah the Moreshtite, prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah, and he spake to all the people of Judah, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord of Hosts: "Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest."'

"Did Hezekiah, king of Judah, and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear the Lord and entreat the favor of the Lord so that the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? But we are on the point of doing great injustice to ourselves."

To the surprise of the priests and the prophets Ahikam's argument prevailed with the princes who sat in judgment, and with the people themselves. They dispersed without further ado, but they continued discussing the situation among themselves.

No punishment was visited upon Jeremiah, but he had a narrow escape.

Jeremiah and Ahikam left the gate arm in arm. They were happy at the renewal of their friendship, even if it took place in the shadow of death.

Ahikam warned his friend to be more careful, when they parted. Jeremiah left him with much to think about. It was the first time that he had been attacked and his life threatened. In addition, though Jeremiah did not hear of it that day, Pashhur had sworn to corner Jeremiah yet, so that he could not escape.

Chapter XI.

A Taste of Martyrdom.

Jeremiah returned home a very sad man, but not a wiser one from the point of view of his safety. He kept much to himself in the city of Anathoth and devoted his time to teaching a group of young men with whom he had surrounded himself.

Among them was Baruch, son of Neriah, of a distinguished Jerusalem family, whose members had always stood high in the counsels of the kings. Baruch was not only a disciple of Jeremiah, but also acted as his secretary when writing was to be done.

Baruch was intimate with Jeremiah's family in Anathoth, and he informed Jeremiah that his cousins did not approve of his actions in the Temple. They did not like the notoriety it brought them and hoped he would hold his peace.

These cousins did not have the courage to speak their mind to Jeremiah face to face, and so he did not trouble about them, their likes or dislikes, their approval or disapproval. He had on his mind a very troublesome problem when it began to be rumored that Jehoiakim was about to re-introduce human sacrifices in Ge-Hinnom.

Ge-Hinnom was the "valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the gate of potsherds, called Tophet." The southwestern gate of the City of Jerusalem overlooked this valley where an altar had

been erected for the atrocious Moloch-worship, but which was destroyed by Josiah during the Reformation.

Jeremiah had but to hear of the king's proposal to re-establish the Moloch-rites, to act.

He went to Jerusalem, despite the pleading of Baruch not to go, gathered a number of the Elders who had been his father's and Josiah's friends and co-workers, and asked them to accompany him to Tophet.

They proceeded through the southwestern gate, "the gate of the valley," followed by a number of idlers, the curious who keep at a distance to see what will happen.

Arrived at the ruins of the altar of Moloch, Jeremiah drew from under his mantle a potter's earthen bottle, and, without giving a hint of what he was about to do, broke it on one of the altar stones. Turning to the Elders, he said:

"Thus said the Lord of Hosts: 'Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again.'"

That was all! He had portrayed more vividly than he could ever have done in a long speech what would be the consequences if the king persisted in bringing back the horrible worship of Moloch.

Returning to the city, Jeremiah stopped at the Temple. He had not been in Jerusalem since he narrowly escaped stoning at the hands of the mob. As soon as he was recognized—and the word of his coming had been spread by the onlookers, who had returned from Tophet ahead of him—the crowd

gathered about him, anxious to hear what he would have to say.

He told them a story first. He had been down at a potter's house that morning, watching the potter at work. The vessel the potter made didn't suit him, so he destroyed it while the clay was yet soft and pliable. Then he made another vessel out of that same clay, "as seemed good to the potter to make it." This story he followed up with a passionate plea to the people:

"'O house of Israel cannot I do with you as this potter?' saith the Lord. 'Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel.'

"'At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.'

"'Now, therefore,' thus saith the Lord: 'Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you. Return ye now every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.'"

Several of the Jerusalem prophets, upon Jeremiah's coming to the Temple, gathered quickly in Pashhur's chambers to talk the matter over. They had thought that the charge of blasphemy had frightened Jeremiah so that he would not return; but here he was again, as persistent in his course as ever. Not one was willing to admit that there was some truth in Jeremiah's pleadings and threats, but all of them came to this conclusion:

"Come and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words."

Pashhur listened to all their talk with amusement. Jeremiah had been a nuisance around the Temple, of which he was chief officer, long enough. Here was his chance to fix him, he thought.

"Come, and let us smite him with the tongue?" he asked, with a jeering laugh. He told them that they were fools to argue with the pest. He would show them how to deal with him.

Pashhur buckled up his mantle, gritting his teeth. He fairly ran to the open place where Jeremiah was speaking. He burst through the crowd with curses upon them all. Facing Jeremiah, he shouted:

"Thou—" but his anger and hate overcame him. He almost foamed at the mouth with rage and could not speak a word.

Before Jeremiah understood what the matter was, Pashhur slapped him on both cheeks with his hands. Then he struck him square on the jaw with his right fist—and Jeremiah dropped to the slabbed marble of the courtyard, where he had been standing.

The crowd was startled and amazed at what had happened. But Pashhur gave no opportunity for remonstrance. A number of the Temple guards, who had come up with their chief, dispersed the people with curses and blows.

Pashhur stood over the prostrate body of Jeremiah, like the victor over his defeated adversary—waiting for him to show signs of rising that he might strike

him again. When Jeremiah regained consciousness, however, the brutal Pashhur had thought better of it. Another such blow and he would have killed the prophet—and Pashhur knew the law on shedding innocent blood.

Therefore, when Jeremiah had fully recovered and had once more risen to his feet, Pashhur arrested him and had him led to the upper Temple gate, which is the gate of Benjamin. There he put him into the stocks with his own hands.

That whole day and that whole night Jeremiah remained pilloried. Hundreds of people passed him. Some, urged on by the priests and the false prophets, mocked at him; some, pitying him from the depths of their hearts, sympathized with him; some spat upon him.

Near the pillory, all that day and night, there hovered a gray-haired Ethiopian who longed to speak a word of cheer and comfort to the unfortunate prophet and to give him water to drink and food to eat, but he dared not because of the guard that Pashhur had placed over him.

During all the terrible agony and shame, Jeremiah did not utter a loud word of complaint or condemnation.

On the following morning Pashhur ordered Jeremiah to be brought to his chamber. There twenty-one stripes were administered to him; and after warning him never to enter Jerusalem again, Pashhur ordered him to leave the city and be thankful he wasn't carried out of it a corpse.

Before going, however, Jeremiah turned on Pashhur and said to him:

"The Lord hath not called thy name Pashhur, but Magor (Terror), for thus saith the Lord: 'Behold I am about to make thee a terror to thyself and to all thy friends; and they shall fall by the sword of your enemy before your very eyes. But thee and all Judah will I give into the hands of the King of Babylon, and he will carry them into captivity and slay them with the sword.

"'Moreover, I will give all the riches of this city and all its possessions and all the treasures of the king of Judah into the hands of their enemies, and they shall carry them away to Babylon; and thou and all that dwell in thy house shall go into captivity, and thou shalt die at Babylon and be buried there, together with all thy friends to whom thou hast prophesied falsely.'"

Here, for the first time, Jeremiah spoke of Babylon as the source from which all the evil impending over Judah was to come. For, one of the Elders who had accompanied him to Tophet, the day before, had whispered to him that Jehoiakim was preparing for a revolt from Nebuchadrezzar.

The reason why such a dangerous idea had entered the mind of Jehoiakim was that Nebuchadrezzar had received word, while yet at Riblah, that his father, Nabopolassar, had died. Without delay, and before having subdued the Palestinian states to his entire satisfaction, he marched to Babylon to be crowned and to establish himself firmly upon his throne.

Jehoiakim thought he saw an opportunity here to regain his independence. Jeremiah knew how foolhardy and impossible this undertaking would be. He so informed Pashhur, therefore, and received a kick and a cuff for his pains, as a farewell from that worthy officer upon leaving Jerusalem.

Chapter XII.

The Woe of the Prophet.

"What now?" Jeremiah asked himself.

Without an idea as to what his next move should be or where he should now turn, he took the road leading to Anathoth.

A day and a night in the stocks and the smarting lashes at Pashhur's hands, had given him a taste of martyrdom, and left him sick of heart and soul. He wanted to go home! Yes, he would go home where he would find, among his relatives and those dear to him, the shelter and comfort and rest that he longed for so much. His heart yearned for love and his soul for peace.

He turned northward. Head bent, spirit crushed, wounded in mind and in body, he approached the town of his birth, where he had spent the happy days of his youth, where he had received his call to prophesy, that ended now in humiliation and disgrace.

The painful, bitter thoughts that passed through his mind were suddenly disturbed by the noise of someone running toward him and calling his name. Jeremiah looked up to see young Baruch, all out of breath, coming toward him, both his arms waving in the air as if giving a warning.

"Flee, master, flee!" Baruch cried, looking back in fear lest some one was pursuing him or would overhear him.

"And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thy house shall go into captivity."
—Jeremiah XX, 6.

"Baruch!" exclaimed Jeremiah, stretching out his arms in welcome. The sight of the young man was the first moment of joy he had had since his encounter with Pashhur.

Baruch did not hear the joyous note in his master's greeting. His face was pale and he was trembling from head to foot. Mechanically he ran into Jeremiah's embrace, but did not return it. Facing Anathoth and pointing toward it, he whispered, rapidly, "They have devised devices against thee, saying, 'Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof; let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.'"

Jeremiah finally succeeded in calming Baruch and drew out of him the fact that his cousins had conspired to kill him, and that, to save himself, he must not enter Anathoth.

Jeremiah's family had been poor but respectable citizens of Anathoth for many generations. They traced their ancestry back to Eli and to the high priest, Abiathar, who served in the Temple during the time of David, but whom Solomon banished to the suburb.

His relatives had always looked upon Jeremiah as the black sheep of the family. Now, in addition to their poverty, he had cast ridicule upon them by his actions, and contempt by his punishment in the stocks. So they decided to put him out of the way and be rid of him, once for all.

By this time the two men had reached the gray, barren hillside from which the Jordan valley and the

Dead Sea can be seen in the distance. It was here where Jeremiah received his call and commission to be a prophet to his people. With deep emotion did he now bewail his lot:

"Ah! I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter and I knew it not."

The injustice and the unrighteousness of it all came to him more forcibly at this place of sacred memories, and he cried:

"Oh, Lord God of Hosts, who judgest righteously, who triest the heart and the mind, I shall see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause."

In the bitterness of his spirit he could no longer restrain his woe. Outcast and disgraced, persecuted in Jerusalem and his life sought for by his own family, Jeremiah cursed the very day of his birth:

"Cursed be the day in which I was born.
Let not the day wherein my mother bore me be blessed.
Cursed be the man who brought joyful tidings to my father, saying,
'A man child is born to thee,' making him very glad.
Let that man be as the cities which the Lord pitilessly overthrew,
Because he did not let me die.
Why was I born to see labor and sorrow,
That my days should be consumed with shame?"

Baruch did not break in upon the grief and anguish of Jeremiah. He turned away, sat down quietly at the foot of a tree and listened, with a fast-

beating heart, to the sobs that were racking the very frame of his beloved teacher.

For a long time the two sat there, each engrossed in his own thoughts. The tree-clad hills of Gilead, to the northeast of them, were now bathed in the deep shadows cast by the rapidly setting sun. Baruch walked over to Jeremiah and laid a light hand upon his shoulder. Jeremiah felt his presence but did not raise his head.

"Master!" Baruch called softly.

Jeremiah looked up into a tear-stained face in which he read sympathy, love and sincere devotion. He arose slowly. The lines of a faint smile of appreciation played about his mouth. He grasped the young man in his embrace and clung to him as if he were his only remaining hope.

"Baruch! Baruch!" he cried, in a tear-choked voice, and held him tight and stroked his head and kissed his forehead. The boy melted into tears in the man's almost crushing embrace, and his very soul went out to him in sympathy and love.

There in the twilight, the bond of friendship had been established between Jeremiah and Baruch, to be broken only in death!

Baruch attempted to comfort his friend, but he at once saw the hopelessness of the task.

Then he suggested to Jeremiah that they run away, that they go to Babylonia, to Egypt, anywhere, to escape the horror of it all at home. But Jeremiah showed him the uselessness of trying to run away from duty's call:

"And if I say, I will not think of it nor speak any more in
His name,
Then there is in mine heart, as it were, a burning fire shut
up in my bones."

There was a fire burning within the heart of Jeremiah, impelling him to prophesy. He could not help himself! He would not escape it!

And, what is more, that day of woe and trial, and the night that followed, bound up Baruch's destiny with that of Jeremiah.

Chapter XIII.

Teacher and Pupil.

Wonderful is the love of teacher and pupil! There is no blood relationship to fuse that love. No selfishness enters into it. There is only the common interest of the spirit upon which it feeds and grows. It is, therefore, a love of the purest type.

Such a love was that of Jeremiah and his pupil, Baruch. Just as the friendship between Josiah and Jeremiah was lasting, because as boys they passed through the same danger at the time of the death of Josiah's father, and just as the friendship between David and Jonathan before them was knit closely together at the time when David was in flight before the anger of King Saul, so Jeremiah and Baruch were closely bound together in friendship and love from the very first night that they spent outside of Anathoth together, when the pupil saved his teacher's life from the conspiracy of his relatives.

Who knows what would have happened to the despondent, disgraced, heart-broken old man that day had not Baruch warned him of the fate that awaited him in his home town!

Yes! At fifty Jeremian was an old man. His beard was gray, his hair white, his shoulders prematurely bent. Deep wrinkles, lines of care and woe, were furrowed in his face. Only at times, when he

delivered his fiery addresses to the people or when he courageously faced an enemy like Pashhur, would he straighten up to his full height and show a semblance of his gaunt form and strong physique.

Teacher and pupil passed many days and nights together in the foothills, undecided on the next step for Jeremiah to take. Just then he dared go neither to Anathoth nor to Jerusalem—and Baruch would not leave him.

Fortunately, for both of them, old Ebed-melech, who had followed Jeremiah from the pillory to Pashhur's chamber and from there, at a distance, when he started for Anathoth, brought them food and drink late that first night of their hiding, and continued to do so every night.

For the present Jeremiah had little hope of returning to his task in Jerusalem. He, therefore, often prayed to God in behalf of his people; but always the answer came back to him:

> "Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah
> and in the streets of Jerusalem?
> Therefore pray not thou for these people,
> Neither lift up cry nor prayer for them,
> Neither make intercession to me,
> For I will not hear thee."

But the effect of prayer is mightier upon the persons who pray than upon those prayed for. While Jeremiah's prayers could not bring back the people of Judah to just and righteous lives without effort on their own part, and while Jeremiah knew well enough that God could not save these people simply because he prayed for them, yet the very act of praying brought comfort and consolation to the distracted

and despondent prophet and to his loving pupil who clung to him.

After some days spent in discussing various plans for returning to Jerusalem, an inspiration came to Jeremiah. He would write out the addresses he had previously delivered in Judah and Jerusalem and add such new thoughts as occurred to him, exactly as the Prophet Amos had done when he was driven out of Bethel to Tekoah!

Many weeks were then spent by Jeremiah in dictating, and by Baruch in writing down the prophecies. At last, when the scroll was completed and Baruch looked up into Jeremiah's face, as if to ask "What now?" Jeremiah took the young man by the shoulders and looking straight into his eyes, said to him:

"I cannot go into the house of the Lord; therefore, go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the Lord in the ears of the people, in the Lord's house upon the fast-day; and thou also shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities.

"It may be they will present their supplication before the Lord, and will return every one from his evil way; for great is the anger and the wrath that the Lord hath pronounced against this people.

"It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."

This suggestion, or rather command, for the moment stunned Baruch. He was not prepared to devote his life to the work of God in behalf of his people, as his master had done. The son and heir of Neriah, Baruch had a splendid future before him. He was a young man, full of hope that his country's trouble

would end, and full of ambition to become a great man in Judah's history; but he knew that if he accepted the mission that the prophet was entrusting to him, he might as well give up all thought of such a future. The same fate that had overtaken Jeremiah would probably overtake him, too.

All this Baruch had told Jeremiah with hesitation and a trembling voice. Jeremiah, both his hands resting on the young man's shoulders, listened very sympathetically. He knew that the great ambitions of his pupil could never be realized. The country was doomed to destruction, unless a great religious and moral revolution should change the character and the lives of the people.

For a moment Jeremiah looked straight into Baruch's eyes with the tenderness of a mother. Then, embracing him tightly in his arms, he pressed him to his heart and said:

"O Baruch! Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the Lord hath added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning—and I find no rest. Thus shalt thou say unto him, Thus saith the Lord: 'Behold, that which I have built will I break down and that which I have planted I will pluck up; and this in the whole land.'

"'And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not; for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh,' saith the Lord; 'but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.'"

For a long time Baruch's head was buried in Jeremiah's arms. Neither spoke a word. Finally, when Jeremiah released Baruch from his embrace, the young man's knees were shaking and he would have dropped to the ground but for the support of Jeremiah's hands.

Tears streamed down his face. Baruch kissed his master's hands again and again and cried out that he would go, that he would do Jeremiah's bidding, which was God's bidding. "And Baruch, the son of Neriah, did according to all that Jeremiah, the prophet, commanded him," and he went down to Jerusalem and "read in the book, the words of the Lord, in the Lord's house."

Chapter XIV.

Baruch's First Venture.

It was the year after, that is 603, the fifth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, and the ninth month, that Baruch took the completed scroll and went down to Jerusalem.

He had timed his coming so as to arrive at the Temple on a great fast-day, when many people were in the Temple courts attending to their sacrifices.

The young man met very few whom he knew and was practically lost in the crowd. Standing at the new gate in the upper court of the Temple, the one built by Josiah, Baruch was wondering what to do. The day was rather cold and everyone was hurrying about his duties, personal or religious, or else seeking a place of warmth and shelter.

Baruch could see no chance of gathering a crowd, to whom to read from his scroll. Like every young man who is about to attempt a big and unusual thing, Baruch hesitated. Then he decided to give up for the present and try again some other time. He tucked the scroll under his arm and prepared to go down from the Temple Mount into the city.

Just as he turned to pass through the gate, however, he ran into no less a prominent personage than Gemariah, son of Shaphan and brother of Ahikam, who had defended Jeremiah during his trial at this very gate.

Gemariah knew Baruch and greeted him most kindly. Baruch, too, was delighted to find someone he knew. After Gemariah had inquired about Anathoth and Baruch's family, he asked "What is that scroll?" Baruch replied that it was something he desired to read to the people assembled in the Temple.

Gemariah laughed affectionately, slapped the young man heartily on the shoulder and asked whether it was some new poem or tale of adventure that he had written. Baruch replied simply that it was something he desired to read in the hearing of the assembled people. Gemariah laughed again and very generously offered him one of the chambers above the new gate for his purpose. Then he actually sent out a crier to assemble a crowd for the young author. With expressions of good wishes Gemariah left Baruch and proceeded to the place of the king, where, in the chambers of the chief scribe, a meeting of the king's counselors had been called to discuss Jehoiakim's proposed revolt from Nebuchadrezzar.

Before long, Gemariah's chamber was overflowing and Baruch was reading from the scroll. His voice was clear and strong. He was evidently very well acquainted with his text, for he emphasized and enthused over particular passages with all the power of an orator:

Thus saith the Lord:

"Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord and whose trust the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the

waters, that spreadeth out its roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat cometh, but its leaf shall be green; and shall not be anxious in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Then Baruch turned to a passage of a different character. He was following a pre-arranged program. He aimed at interesting his audience first with selections of poetic charm and beauty. So he read:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the mind, I try the heart, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doing. As the partridge that sitteth on eggs that she hath not laid, so is he that getteth riches, and not by right; in the midst of his days they shall leave him, and at his end he shall be a fool."

These beautiful figures of speech brought Baruch a round of applause. He now had his audience; so he proceeded, and, with the fire and fervor of a Jeremiah, delivered the following:

"The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: It is graven upon the tablet of your heart, and upon the horns of your altar.

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts:

"'Because ye have not heard my words, behold I will send and take all the families of the north,' saith the Lord, 'and I will send unto you Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations.

"'Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the lamp. And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon.'"

Ah! The young man, then, was a prophet! This was evident to everyone. He was speaking as did

the Prophet Uriah, whom the king had put to death, and as spoke the Prophet Jeremiah who, last year, had been pilloried and driven out of Jerusalem!

Murmurs of astonishment and of pity arose from the audience. Men whispered to each other about the brilliant young man's probable arrest, punishment and, perhaps, death. Baruch felt instinctively the drift of the conversations, and smiled. With a well-selected passage he brought the talkers back to attention by the power and forcefulness of his oratory. He was a transformed man, cool, collected, eyes ablaze and peering at the very souls of his hearers. He held them and swayed them and finally moved many to tears and to ask, "Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us?" "What is our iniquity?" "What is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?"

Now Baruch told them who he was and whose the addresses were. And in answer to the questions put to him he quoted from Jeremiah:

> "Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Lord, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshiped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law; and ye have done evil more than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart, so that ye hearken not unto me; therefore will I cast you forth out of this land, into the land that ye have not known, neither ye nor your fathers."

It was, indeed, fortunate for Baruch that none of the Temple prophets happened to be in the audience. There was present, however, a young man who was at first amused at Baruch's poetic fancies, then interested,

then outraged when he discovered that he was listening to Jeremiah's prophesies. This young man was Micaiah, son of Gemariah, in whose chamber Baruch was speaking.

Now, Micaiah, grandson of the illustrious Shaphan, was growing up to be a different type from his noble ancestor. He was proud of his father's position at court and in the temple. He moved in the choicest royal circles and was a devoted court follower.

When Baruch had finished his answer to the questioners, Macaiah had had enough. Without a word he made his way through the crowd and ran all the way to the palace where, he knew, his father was at the counsel of the princes.

Post-haste and out of breath, he entered the scribe's chamber and repeated, as best he could, the words he had heard Baruch read out of the book to the people.

Here was a very awkward situation. The princes admitted Jeremiah's cleverness and Baruch's courage; but just at this time, when the king was contemplating rebellion from Babylonia, such preaching was treasonable and would prove injurious to the cause.

They held a hurried conference. Some were for the immediate arrest of Baruch; some were for his immediate death; some, who were opposed to rebellion, were for hearing the book read to them. Among the latter was Gemariah. One of their number, therefore, Jehudi by name, was despatched to the Temple with orders to bring Baruch and his scroll to the palace.

Chapter XV.

The King Hears and Acts.

Jehudi arrived in Gemariah's chamber to hear Baruch finish this:

"Thus saith the Lord:
"'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; neither let the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me, that I am the Lord who exerciseth loving-kindness, justice and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.'"

Jehudi pushed his way roughly through the crowd to Baruch. He laid his hand upon the speaker's shoulder and ordered him, in the name of the princes, to accompany him.

Baruch did not hesitate. His mind had been made up to face any consequences that might result from his mission. His heart, therefore, was strong and he accompanied Jehudi without protest.

Some of the princes marveled at the youth of Baruch, when they beheld him. He felt much reassured when Gemariah stepped forward, smiled at him and took the scroll from his hands. The son of Shaphan glanced at several columns of the scroll, returned it to Baruch and said:

"Sit down, now, and read it in our ears."

While selecting his passages, Baruch thought very quickly. Why not select prophecies that these princes

would repeat to the king? Nothing could please his master more than that Jehoiakim should hear; perhaps, at last, he would understand. Therefore Baruch chose the following, addressed to the "King of Judah that sittest upon the throne of David, thou and thy servants and thy people".

"Execute ye justice and righteousness and deliver him that is robbed out of the hand of the oppressor; and do no wrong, do no violence, to the sojourner, the fatherless, nor the widow; neither shed innocent blood in this place.

"For if ye do this thing, indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants and his people. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation."

As Baruch proceeded, he noted the restlessness of the princes under the thunderbolt denunciations contained in his master's words. So, he selected for his concluding passage this warning:

"For thus saith the Lord concerning the house of the king of Judah:

"'Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon; yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited.

"'And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons; and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire.

"'And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbor, "Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this great city?" Then they shall answer, "Because they forsook the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshiped other gods, and served them."'"

Upon hearing this, the princes "turned in fear one toward another," and the spokesman said, "We will surely tell the king of all these words."

Baruch was happy. His first venture upon his mission had proved more successful than even Jeremiah

could have hoped. He handed the scroll to Jehudi, expressed his thanks for the courtesy shown him, made his adieus and prepared to leave. Gemariah stopped him at the entrance, however, and said to him, warningly and with emphasis:

"Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah, and let no man know where ye are."

Baruch left the palace completely satisfied. Not only had he read the prophecies to the people, but also to the princes; and now the princes themselves were to read them to the king. On his way to Jeremiah's hiding place, however, some of the joy in his heart left him, because, thinking of Gemariah's suggestion, he feared lest the anger of the king should be aroused and a search be sent out for Jeremiah with the purpose of arresting him.

The winter palace was one of the achievements upon which Jehoiakim always congratulated himself because of its structure and beauty. Gemariah and the princes found the king in the sun parlor. Though the day was bright and clear, it was unusually cold. A charcoal fire in an Assyrian-wrought brass brazier, provided warmth for Jehoiakim who, at this time, was by no means a well man.

The king was greatly amused by Gemariah's story of the incidents at the Temple gate and in the scribe's chamber. He laughed heartily at the fact that Neriah's son was turning prophet.

Jehoiakim asked to see the scroll. Gemariah, not knowing what the king's attitude would be, had left it behind. Jehudi was sent for it. Jehoiakim seated

himself comfortably in front of the brazier, while the princes were standing, and ordered Jehudi to read to him.

Jehudi had read but three or four columns when the king, to the amazement of the princes, rose and in anger snatched it out of his hands.

He glanced through parts of the papyrus, and, with an amused smile, took a penknife out of his robe and began to slice the scroll into pieces.

Several of the princes appealed to the king not to destroy it. In reply, Jehoiakim walked up and down the chamber, cursing and swearing that such things should be in his kingdom. He punctuated his remarks by throwing piece after piece of the scroll into the brazier until it was all consumed. Then he dismissed the princes, called them back and ordered that the army prepare for rebellion, dismissed them again, once more called them back and gave command that Jeremiah and Baruch be found and brought before him, dead or alive.

Chapter XVI.

Beginning of the End.

Jeremiah waited eagerly for the return of Baruch and listened most attentively to the story of his adventure at the Temple and in the palace of the king. His pupil's bravery and courage in trying moments pleased the master greatly, and he complimented Baruch on his achievements thus far. The question of the restoration of the scroll never entered Jeremiah's mind at all, on account of his gladness in having had his discourses brought home to the king.

Three days later, however, Ebed-melech brought with the provisions the news that Jehoiakim had burned the scroll. Upon hearing this, all the spirit of hopefulness left Jeremiah. He lost his temper and, at once, dictated the following prophecy against Jehoiakim:

"Concerning Jehoiakim, king of Judah, thou shalt say," Thus saith the Lord:

" 'Thou has burned this roll, saying "Why hast thou written therein saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?" '

"Therefore, thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim, king of Judah:

" 'He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them.' "

Then Jeremiah took another papyrus and began once more the laborious task of dictating his discourses to Baruch.

Those were indeed days of pain and sorrow for Jeremiah and Baruch. They were not troubled so much by Jehoiakim's designs upon their lives—for Ebed-melech kept them well informed on the progress of the search—as they were by the preparations for rebellion. They knew that this was the beginning of the end.

At one time the faithful, old Ethiopian warned them that the search party was near at hand. They were forced to hide in a cave for two days. It was then that Jeremiah cried:

"Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth."

This danger past, Jeremiah and Baruch continued their laborious task of finishing the new scroll of prophecies. Then came Spring, and with it Jehoiakim's rebellion.

Nebuchadrezzar had not yet fully established himself on his throne in Babylon. He was too busy to deal with the rebellious Judean, himself. So he ordered a guerrilla warfare to be carried on by detached troops in all parts of Judah. It was only a question of time, however, when Nebuchadrezzar would invade Judah with his entire army and crush Jehoiakim like a snail under foot. No wonder that Jeremiah asked:

"Who will have pity on thee, O Jerusalem?
Or who will bemoan thee?
Or who will turn aside to ask for thy welfare?"

His grief was not alone for the great and glorious city and for its people, but for himself as well, that he should have to witness what he knew was inevitable:

"Oh, that I could comfort myself against sorrow!
My heart is faint within me.
The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved.
For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt.
I mourn; dismay hath taken hold of me.
Is there no balm in Gilead?
Is there no physician there?
Why, then, is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

"Oh, that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears,
That I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.
Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men;
That I might leave my people and go from them."

This despondency and hopelessness did not last long, however. As Nebuchadrezzar's guerrillas continued their cruel and merciless warfare, destroying crops and whole villages, Jeremiah determined that he must once more return to Jerusalem. He was ready and willing to pay for his efforts in behalf of his country with his life, if need be.

A comforting and encouraging message came to him from God, at this time:

"I will make thee unto this people a fortified, brazen wall; and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee, for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee.

"And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible."

But Baruch and Ebed-melech counseled against undue risks. They had heard that the Rechabites, that tribe of wandering nomads, which, because of the vow their ancestor, Jonadab, son of Rechab, had taken never to settle permanently in any definite place and never to follow agricultural pursuits, had been driven south by the marauding guerrillas and were making their way toward Jerusalem. Jeremiah and Baruch fell in with them and came, unobserved, into the city.

Many strange stories had been told about these nomads and the whole population turned out to gape and wonder at them. Jeremiah directed them to the Temple, and hundreds of people followed them.

At the Temple, Jeremiah ordered bowls of wine and cups and invited the Rechabites to refresh themselves with drink.

Jazaniah, their leader, arose in his place and, with a courteous bow to Jeremiah, replied:

"We drink no wine. For, Jonadab, our father, commanded us: 'Ye shall never drink wine, neither ye nor your sons. And we have obediently done just as Jonadab, our forefather, commanded us.'"

This incident gave Jeremiah the opportunity once more to pen his artillery against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

"Thus saith the Lord:

"'Will he not learn instruction as to how one should heed my words? For, while the sons of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, have performed the command of their forefather, this people hath not hearkened unto me.'

"Therefore, thus saith the Lord: 'Behold I am about to bring upon Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them.'"

Jeremiah thus revealed dramatically the meaning of all his preaching. Just as the Rechabites had remained faithful to the ancient vow of their ancestors, so must Judah remain faithful to the covenant between them and their God, if the country was to be saved from the hands of the Babylonians.

Yet, this proved to be but one more act in the hopeless part that Jeremiah was playing in the drama of Judah. Hopeless, indeed, it was now. As Jeremiah himself expressed it:

> "Can the Ethiopian change his skin,
> Or the leopard his spots?
> Then may ye also do good
> That are taught to do evil."

The very next year, the year 597, Nebuchadrezzar gathered his full army at Riblah and prepared to march on Jerusalem.

Chapter XVII.

The First Deportation.

Poor, miserable Jehoiakim! He was not even given an opportunity to meet Nebuchadrezzar on the battlefield in a single engagement. The Babylonian had hardly entered Judean territory when Jehoiakim died and was buried with his ancestors.

Of course, Jeremiah's prohecy, at the moment of his anger, that Jehoiakim's body would be thrown to the dogs, did not come true; but the king's death did not in any way put off the calamity that was to befall Jerusalem and its people. Upon hearing of Jehoiakim's death, Nebuchadrezzar, at Riblah hastened his preparations to besiege Jerusalem.

An eighteen-year-old boy, Coniah, also known as Jehoiachin. succeeded his incapable father to the throne.

Jeremiah's advice to the young king was to submit to Nebuchadrezzar and remain in peace. The policy of Nebuchadrezzar, with regard to his dependencies, was that of peace. As long as they did not rebel and paid their tribute, he left them entirely undisturbed to work out their own futures.

So Jeremiah hoped that if Jehoiachin would at once show his willingness to be honest with Nebuchadrezzar, there would still be a chance for the country. Therefore he sent this message to the king:

"Say to the king and to the queen mother, 'Sit ye down low,
For from the head hath fallen your fair crown.'"

Urged on by the queen mother and his father's counselors, however, Jehoiachin proposed to hold out against the Babylonian siege. Jeremiah, therefore, delivered the following oration in Jerusalem:

"As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah (Jehoiachin), the son of Jehioakim, were the signet ring upon my right hand, I would pluck him thence. And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, whom thou dreadest, into the hands of the Chaldeans, and I will hurl thee forth, and thy mother who bore thee, into a land where ye were not born, and there ye shall die. But to the land for which they long they shall not return.

"Is Coniah despised as a broken vessel and thrown forth into a land which he knoweth not? O land, land, hear the word of the Lord! Write down this man as childless! For no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah."

But Jehoiachin continued his stubborn defense until, driven by the horrors of famine, he

"together with his mother and his servants, his princes and his chamberlains went to meet Nebuchadrezzar."

On this unconditional surrender, Nebuchadrezzar determined never again to be troubled by stiff-necked, rebellious Judah. To that end he thoroughly ransacked the treasuries of the Temple and of the royal palace. He took away all the gold vessels that belonged to the worship of the Temple and, in addition, carried away

"as captives, all Jerusalem and all the princes and all the mighty warriors, even ten thousand, and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained, except the poorest people of the land."

"And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon; and the king's mother and the king's wives, and his chamberlains, and the chief men of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.

"And all the men of ability, even seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths, a thousand, all of them strong and ready for war; these the king of Babylon took captive to Babylon."

This was the first great deportation, in the year 597. The pride and strength of the country were taken away and led captive to a strange land.

Poor Jeremiah!

Now he did not glory in the fact that all that he had spoken had finally come true.

He wept bitterly. He mourned as if every one of the exiles had been his brothers and sisters. He could not be consoled.

But when his first grief had worn off and the Prophet had a chance to study the conditions and to consider the future, God vouchsafed to him a new message for his people—a message of hope and of promise.

Chapter XVIII.

In Exile and in the Homeland.

Stripped of all its best people the country was in a sorry plight when, in the year 596, Nebuchadrezzar, on departing for Babylon, raised Zedekiah to the throne of Judah.

Zedekiah was an uncle of the ill-fated Jehoiachin. He was the third son of Josiah, and, like his brothers, Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, he was to see the fortunes of Judah ebb to their lowest point, and finally to witness the destruction of the capital and the end of Judah.

The king had to surround himself with a vulgar, arrogant and uncouth set of people. All of the princes and leading Judeans who were taken to Babylon had been forced to sell their estates and properties at whatever price they would bring. These were bought up by anyone that came along and created a class of newly-rich that the country had never had before.

The court was now, therefore, composed of these newly-rich, who knew nothing about affairs of state, but who prided themselves on the fact that because they were spared in Judah, they were the choice remnant of God.

Zedekiah himself was feeble, slow to make up his mind and to come to a decision. He went to everybody for suggestions and help, including Jeremiah

and the horde of false prophets that swarmed in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, he always took the wrong advice.

Notwithstanding these unpromising conditions, Jeremiah was filled with new hope for his land and people. He believed that now they would understand his position regarding them and the meaning of his constant preaching and teaching.

One day he was walking through a fig orchard near Anathoth. It was harvest time and everywhere there were baskets laden with figs. Under a particularly fine tree he noticed two baskets. One was filled with very good figs; the other with very bad ones. Immediately he saw in them a symbol for his people.

He compared Zedekiah, his upstart courtiers and the remnant in Jerusalem to the basket of bad figs. The princes, elders, mechanics and artisans, whom Nebuchadrezzar had carried away, he compared to the basket of good figs. There was no message of hope in the "bad figs" now ruling the country; there was hope, however, in the exiles. Therefore Jeremiah sent the following letter to the Jews in Babylonia:

"Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens and eat the fruit of them. Take ye wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply ye there, and be not diminished.

"And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

"For, thus saith the Lord: 'After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For

I know the thoughts that I think toward you,' saith the Lord, 'thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you hope in your latter end.

"'And ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

"'And I will be found of you,' saith the Lord, 'and I will turn again your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you,' saith the Lord; 'and I will bring you again unto the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.'"

Jerusalem, however, swarmed with false prophets who took themselves seriously. They prophesied the immediate fall of Babylonia; they promised the people that within two years the very Temple vessels that Nebuchadrezzar had carried away would be restored and Judah rejuvenated in its ancient glory.

Politicians, too, became active. Zedekiah, urged on by them, was making alliances with the little countries about Judah, with Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon, for the purpose of rebellion against Babylon; and behind them all was Pharaoh Hophrah, who came to the throne of Egypt in 589, and who immediately turned his eyes to Babylon, hoping to accomplish what Pharaoh Necho had failed to do.

Jeremiah denounced both prophets and politicians most bitterly. When ambassadors from the neighboring states came to Jerusalem, to consult with Zedekiah and to receive a message from the Egyptian king that he was ready to send an army to assist them against Babylon, Jeremiah appeared in the Market Place with thongs and yokes around his neck and on his arms. He sent a yoke to each of the foreign ambassadors, with a message to all of them advising

that they permit the yoke of Babylon to remain around their necks, resting assured that the rebellion was doomed to failure.

In the Market Place Jeremiah was met by Hananiah, one of the false prophets. Hananiah tore the yoke from Jeremiah's neck, broke it over his knee and exclaimed:

"Thus saith the Lord:
" 'So will I break the yoke of the king of Babylon from the neck of all the nations.' "

Jeremiah answered:

"Thus saith the Lord:
" 'Thou hast broken the yoke of wood, but I will make a yoke of iron. I will put a yoke of iron on the necks of all these peoples that they may serve the king of Babylon.' "

And to Zedekiah he sent the following message:

"Bring your neck into his yoke and serve the king of Babylon; for these prophets prophesy a lie to you. 'I have not sent them,' saith the Lord, 'and they prophesy in My name falsely, that they might drive you out, and that ye might perish, together with the prophets who have prophesied falsely to you.' "

But Jeremiah's efforts were all in vain. That same year, 589, the rebellion broke out. Nebuchadrezzar did not delay long. He poured his trained veterans into Palestine. They marched through the country with the ease and assurance of a brook running along in its smooth course. Within a few months they were before Jerusalem and, in 588, besieged it.

Chapter XIX.

A Friend in Need.

Zedekiah sent messenger after messenger into Egypt, urging, pleading, begging Hophrah to come to his assistance.

Jeremiah cried that it was too late; that Hophrah would not come.

"Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is but a noise; he hath let the appointed time pass by."

Hophrah, however, did finally bestir himself. Word came to Jerusalem, and it reached the besieging forces, that a vast army of Egyptians was on the march northward. To the surprise of all, Nebuchadrezzar withdrew from Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem prophets were jubilant. They saw their hopeful forecasts all fulfilled and Judah once more independent. But Jeremiah knew better. He held out no such false hopes:

"Behold, Pharaoh's army, which has come out to help you, shall return to Egypt. Then the Chaldeans shall come back and fight against the city and shall take it and burn it with fire.

"Do not deceive yourselves with the idea that the Chaldeans will depart from you; for they shall not depart. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men, yet would these arise up each in his tent, and burn this city with fire."

Although this sounds like a trumpet call of doom, Jeremiah was not without hope. The course of

events, as he saw it, included the fall of Judah at the hands of Nebuchadrezzar; but he hoped also for a later rehabilitation of the land and rebuilding of the capital.

Jeremiah pinned his faith on the exiles in Babylonia and the certainty of their return to Judah. To picture his hope vividly, he determined to purchase his family estate in Anathoth. While Jerusalem was celebrating the withdrawal of the Babylonian troops and awaiting the coming of Hophrah's army, Jeremiah, with this in mind, started for Anathoth.

At the gates of the town, however, he was arrested and brought back to Jerusalem in chains. He was accused of high treason, of having spied out Jerusalem, and of attempting to escape to the Babylonians with the secrets. Without trial he was sentenced to prison and jailed in the guard house of the Temple garrison.

But this was not sufficient for the princes who had trumped up this charge against Jeremiah. They came to Zedekiah and charged that, by his speeches and actions, he was undermining discipline in the army and weakening the spirit of the people. They demanded that he be put to death.

Zedekiah, always weak and uncertain, replied, "Behold, he is in your hands." But they dared not kill Jeremiah outright.

"Then took they Jeremiah and cast him into the cistern that was in the Court of the Guard; and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the cistern there was no water, but mire; and Jeremiah sank in the mire."

There was one person in the Court of the Guard who might have drawn Jeremiah right up out of the cistern where he had been left to die, had he not feared the wrath of the princes. It was Ebed-melech, the old, faithful friend. The Ethiopian was not afraid to die; but he felt that it would be useless to attempt to spirit Jeremiah away, for both would surely be caught. He cast about for some other means to save him whom he loved only as he had loved Josiah, the friend of his youth.

Had Ebed-melech known, however, that Jeremiah was sunk thigh-deep in mud, and that he had given himself up to die, he would have acted more quickly. It was on the second evening that he stole quietly out of the palace and up to the Court of the Guards. With great care, so as not to be discovered, he crawled to the cistern prison and leaned his gray head on the rim to listen. Jeremiah was praying:

"O Lord, Thou knowest.
Remember me and visit me.
Know that for Thy sake I have suffered reproach.
Thy words were found, and I did eat them,
And Thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart;
For I am called by Thy name.
O Lord, God of hosts, why is my pain perpetual?"

Yes! There was no mistake about it—Jeremiah wanted to die! Hot tears coursed down Ebed-melech's cheeks as he listened. Then he whispered a hurried word of hope to the prisoner and was off for the palace as fast as his old legs could carry him.

Twice he was stopped by the guards, but each time quickly released. Everyone knew Ebed-melech, his story of Josiah's escape, his privileges in the palace. He was a fixture at the court, and people said that he would never die.

Arrived at the palace, he demanded to see the king. Brought into the presence of Zedekiah he asked to speak to him alone. When both were left alone, he fell at Zedekiah's feet. Pointing to the door through which several princes had just gone out, he said:

"My Lord, the King!
"These men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah, the prophet, whom they have cast into the pit. He is like to die in the place where he is."

Raising his head and looking straight into the king's eyes, he pleaded for the life of Jeremiah. He spoke very fast, his grey head shaking and his lips trembling. At last he finished his impassioned speech, prostrated himself before Zedekiah and kissed the hem of his robe.

Zedekiah graciously yielded to Ebed-melech's pleading and sent three men with him to raise Jeremiah out of the cistern. More dead than alive, Jeremiah was again taken to the guard house. Ebed-melech was given free access to his cell at all times.

A few days later Zedekiah requested Ebed-melech to bring Jeremiah to him, secretly. Rumor had it that Pharaoh Hophrah had halted in his march northward, because the Babylonians had lifted the siege, and was returning to Egypt. Zedekiah, therefore, wanted to know from Jeremiah:

"Is there any word from the Lord? Conceal nothing from me."

Jeremiah answered him:

"If I declare it to you, will you promise not to put me to death? And if I give you counsel, you will not hearken to me."

But Zedekiah wanted to hear. Vacillating as he was, he hoped that perhaps this time Jeremiah would bring him a message of assurance. So, he swore to him, saying:

"As the Lord liveth, who hath given us this life, I will not put you to death; neither will I give you into the hands of these men."

Thereupon Jeremiah fearlessly delivered his final message to the king:

"They have betrayed thee; they have overcome thee, thy familiar friends!
They have caused thy feet to sink in the mire; they turn back!
They shall also bring out all your sons to the Chaldeans.
You yourself shall not escape out of their hands,
But shall be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon;
And this city shall be burned."

Zedekiah did not tear and rage as his brother, Jehoiakim, would have done at such a message. He did not possess enough energy or determination for that. In a hopeless sort of voice he simply sent Jeremiah back to the guard house, where Ebed-melech continued looking after him.

Once more Jeremiah proceeded to give practical evidence of his faith in the future of Judah, if the country would only submit to Babylonian rule; or, if king and princes and false prophets persisted in pushing the country to its fall, of his faith in the

Babylonian exiles, who, he truly believed, would return and build up Judah again.

Therefore, with the assistance of Ebed-melech and Baruch, who was a frequent visitor to his master, Jeremiah arranged for and purchased the family property near Anathoth from his uncle, Hananel, and turning the deed over to Baruch, said to him:

"Take this purchase deed and put it in an earthen vessel, that it may remain for years to come. For, thus saith the Lord, 'Houses and fields and vineyards shall yet again be bought in this land.'"

Events that followed, however, seemed to mock his enthusiasm and his hope. The rumor of Hophrah's return to Egypt was verified—and Nebuchadrezzar was still encamped at Riblah.

Chapter XX.

In the Midst of Despair.

The year 586!

What a terrible year it was for Jerusalem and Judah—and Jeremiah!

Oh, the famine, the misery, the horrors within Jerusalem when the Babylonians besieged the city for the second time.

Oh, the carnage, the massacre, the hopeless destruction when the Babylonians finally captured Jerusalem and burned the Temple!

On the ninth day of the fourth month the first breach was made in the outer walls of Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan, the commander of Nebuchadrezzar's body guard, who led the besieging forces.

True to his character of weakling, Zedekiah, with his nobles, at this first sign of danger to the city, fled from Jerusalem through the king's gardens and the south gate, by night. When the news of the king's departure reached the Babylonians, Nebuzaradan, with a chosen troop, followed immediately in hot pursuit. The whole renegade lot were captured in the plains of Jericho. Thrown into chains, they were sent to Riblah, to Nebuchadrezzar, while Nebuzaradan returned to his command, to push the final capture of Jerusalem with an energy equal to that with which his master had destroyed Nineveh.

Two terrible tragedies were being enacted at about the same time, in Jerusalem and at Riblah. Nebuchadrezzar timed his performances at Riblah with the news that was brought to him from the doomed Jerusalem.

On the day when the report of the capture of the second defenses reached Riblah, Nebuchadrezzar gathered all his court in the market place, which had been transformed into a festive arena. Zedekiah, his sons and the Judean princes of the blood, in full regalia, were enthroned on platforms, on one side of the arena. Nebuchadrezzar and his courtiers were enthroned in full state on the other.

Zedekiah and his people, who had heard no news from the besieged capital, were greatly astonished at this whole procedure. They were soon to understand, however. At a given signal heralds entered and announced the report from the front. Following this came Nebuchadrezzar's body guard leading the lesser Judean nobles in chains; and, at a command given by a Babylonian officer from Nebuchadrezzar's platform, these were slaughtered before the eyes of Zedekiah, and of his sons and princes, in cold blood.

When the news was brought that Jerusalem had finally fallen, a second festival was held in Riblah in the same way. To all appearances, Zedekiah and his sons were the royal guests of the royal Nebuchadrezzar at a great royal celebration. It was noticeable, however, that the Judean princes of the blood were missing from the side of their king and his sons.

At the proper time the heralds announced the tidings from before Jerusalem, the Judean princes were marched into the center of the festive throng—and beheaded.

Finally, on the eighth day of the fifth month, the month of Ab, news came to Riblah that on the day before, the seventh of Ab, the destruction of the city had begun. The report stated that the little garrison in the Temple was holding out, but that Nebuzaradan hoped to finish up his work and burn the Temple on the day after; that is, on the ninth day of Ab.

Nebuchadrezzar took it for granted that Nebuzaradan's estimate of events was correct. Just at about the time, therefore, that Nebuchadrezzar calculated the Temple ought to be burning, on the ninth day of Ab, the final horror in Riblah began.

This time Zedekiah sat alone on his platform, a hopeless, shrunken figure, the mockery of a king. His heart told him the tragedy that he was about to behold; but he did not know what terrible thing the Babylonian had prepared for the climax.

Zedekiah's sons, mere boys, were brought into the open space before Nebuchadrezzar. Rings had been pierced through their noses and they were led by chains, like animals. A loud fanfare announced their coming. The trumpet notes were like so many sword points in Zedekiah's heart.

The young princes, too, knew what awaited them. Innocent of any crime, they marched bravely to their fate. One after another they laid their heads on the block, brave descendants of King David.

Zedekiah saw the executioner's axe rise—and fall; and again; and again!

His heart stopped beating. His brain was numb. His body was without feeling. He never knew just when he was led from his mock throne, nor by whom, nor where he was led to. He did not hear the jeers and howling of the blood-infuriated Chaldeans, nor the commands given him by his captors, nor the words addressed to him by Nebuchadrezzar himself.

All at once he felt a severe pain in his head, a shock through his entire nervous system, a red-fire-like blur before his eyes—and he was blind forever. The eyes that, for the last time, had looked upon the writhing bodies of his headless children had been pierced out by the royal spear in Nebuchadrezzar's hand!

In Jerusalem the tragedy was less studied and, therefore, the carnage was much greater. Imprisoned in the guard house, Jeremiah did not know the worst; but he surmised it.

He had not seen Ebed-melech or Baruch for several days. He did not know what progress the siege was making. No one had time to stop and speak with him. Even food was no longer brought to him. In his loneliness and helplessness, he turned to God:

"There is none like unto Thee, O Lord!
Thou art great and Thy name is great in might.
Who should not fear Thee, O King of the nations?
The Lord is the true God.
He is the living God and an everlasting King.
He hath made the earth by His power;
He hath established the world by His wisdom;
By His understanding hath He stretched out the heavens.

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself;
It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.
O Lord God, correct me, but in judgment,
Not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing."

Finally came the seventh day, and then the ninth day of Ab! He heard the shouts and the clang of hand-to-hand fighting. The thick prison walls could not shut out the curses of hating, contending men, the shrieks of the wounded, the prayers and moans of the dying.

On the night of the seventh day of Ab he knew that the Babylonian had entered Jerusalem. The red sky told him that the city was burning. On the next day, he judged from the noises and commands within the garrison that preparations were being made for the last stand.

All that day and all that night long he heard the fighting on the Temple Mount. He pictured to himself every step of the retreating, beaten Judeans and the oncoming, victorious Babylonians.

On the morning of the next day, the fatal ninth of Ab, the oppressive heat told him that the Temple was on fire. Through the day, the shouting and the fighting died slowly away. Jeremiah knew that the end had come for his beloved fatherland—and for himself. His presence in the guard house had been accidentally or purposely forgotten!

At sunrise the next day, he was suddenly aroused from his aimless, mental wanderings by the noisy marching of troops. They passed his prison without stopping. He shouted, but they did not hear him. He could not see who they were, but surmised that they must be Babylonians.

Several hours passed and once more he heard the heavy steps of troops. This time he shouted at the top of his feeble voice and pounded the iron bars. They halted. Several were dispatched to the guard house. They broke open the door and brought forth a gray-headed, gray-bearded, unkempt little man, whose face and bearing showed the horrors he had been through.

The soldiers made sport of him, but the commander did not permit them to kill a helpless old man. Instead, he sent Jeremiah, through the ruins of the Temple and the city, with hundreds of others, to the prisoners' camp at Ramah, five miles north of Jerusalem.

Chapter XXI.

Lamentations and a Vain Hope.

It is said that ties of true friendship are often stronger than ties of blood. Of such stuff were the ties made that bound together the families of Hilkiah, the priest, and Shaphan, the scribe. Hilkiah and Shaphan labored hand in hand with King Josiah in his reforms. Shaphan's sons, Ahikam and Gemariah, came to the assistance of Hilkiah's son, Jeremiah, when the latter was in sorest need. Now a grandson of Shaphan, Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, was to give a temporary haven to the weary Jeremiah.

The whole of the Shaphan family followed in the footsteps of their noble ancestor. Both Ahikam and Gemariah belonged to the Prophetic Party; though, unlike Jeremiah, they took the course of least resistance and continued in favor with the royal house.

Nebuchadrezzar, who kept himself informed concerning the political leanings of the leading families in Jerusalem, therefore believed that if he raised a scion of Shaphan's family to the governorship of Judah, the country would remain loyal and leave him to his peace in upbuilding Babylon.

Accordingly, Ahikam's and Gemariah's families were spared during the general slaughter in Jerusalem, and Gedaliah, Ahikam's son, was made governor of Judah when the victorious Babylonians had finished their work in the land.

There was still another person whom Nebuchadrezzar had given orders to spare—Jeremiah. Nothing would have pleased Nebuchadrezzar better than for Jehoiakim and Zedekiah to have followed the counsel of Jeremiah. Therefore, the prophet was not only to be saved from the carnage, but he was to be rewarded.

Nebuzaradan had strict orders to find Jeremiah. In fact, the troop which Jeremiah had heard in the garrison and that accidentally saved him was in search of him at the time.

Nebuzaradan knew that Jeremiah was alive, through Baruch. Baruch had been captured and thrown into chains on the seventh day of Ab. When he heard that the Babylonians were searching for Jeremiah to save him, he informed them that he was imprisoned in the garrison.

The captain of the troop had no idea that the emaciated old man was a prophet; but he thanked his stars that he had not permitted his soldiers to slay the poor fellow. He complimented himself when, at Ramah, he discovered that he had Jeremiah in his keeping and was complimented by the commander-in-chief when he brought Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan's tent.

While in the prisoners' camp, Jeremiah could not get out of his mind's eye the picture of devastation that he had beheld while passing through Jerusalem. He kept entirely away from his fellow prisoners. He wanted, and needed, to be alone. It was during these days he composed his Lamentations on Jerusalem:

"How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people?
She is become as a widow, that was great among the nations!
She that was a princess among the provinces is become a tributary!
She weepeth sore i the night and her tears are on her cheeks;
Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her:
All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they are become her enemies.
All that pass by clap their hands at thee:
They hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying,
Is this the city that men called
The perfection of beauty,
The joy of the whole earth?
All thine enemies have opened their mouth wide against thee:
They hiss and gnash the teeth: they say,
'We have swallowed her up:
Certainly this is the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen it.'"

But Jeremiah, even in this great extremity, was not a man without hope for the future. He knew his God and understood that His anger with the worst of men or nations does not last forever:

"This I recall to my mind; therefore have I hope.
It is of the Lord's loving-kindnesses that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.
They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness.
The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him.
The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him.
It is good that a man should hope and quietly wait for the sa ation of the Lord.
It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth;
Let him sit alone and keep silence, because He hath laid it upon him;
Let him put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope.
Let him give his cheek to him that smiteth him; let him be filled full with reproach.
For the Lord will not cast off forever."

Jeremiah was not particularly interested when he was ordered to appear before Nebuzaradan. It did not really matter to him any longer what would happen to him. He had fought a brave fight—and had lost. Life or death made no difference now. In fact, he would rather have died at the hands of the Babylonians than at the hands of his own people. So, he replied listlessly that he was ready.

Even when given clean garments and ordered to bathe and told to brighten up and be cheerful, because all would be well with him, he could not figure out what it all meant until he was in the tent of Nebuzaradan. Then, hope was born anew in his heart, as he listened to what the commander had to say to him:

"The Lord your God pronounced evil upon this place; you have sinned against the Lord and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come to you.

"And now behold, I loose you this day from the chains which are upon your hand. If it seem good to you to come with me to Babylon, come and I will look out for you. But if it seem undesirable to you to come with me to Babylon, do not come; but go back to Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people; or go wherever it seems right to you to go."

Jeremiah replied, shortly, that he preferred to remain in Judah. A clear look again came to his eyes; his shoulders straightened up; he carried his head erect once more; he had new work, on the old lines, to do.

He also asked a favor—that Baruch, son of Neriah, and Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian freedman of the

royal house, if alive, should be permitted to remain with him.

Both his preference and his request were granted. Baruch was found among the living in Riblah and Ebed-melech at the camp in Ramah. Nebuzaradan gave Jeremiah provisions and presents and sent him, with his two companions, to Gedaliah, who had established his capital at the ancient city of Mizpah, on the dividing line between the old kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

On his departure from Judah, Nebuchadrezzar had deported with him practically the entire population that was of any consequence. He left behind only the poorest of vine dressers and farmers.

Gedaliah's position as governor, therefore, seemed to be but an empty honor. The country a wilderness, the capital in hopeless ruins, the Temple a pile of smoking and smouldering ashes—it was not a picture to bring rejoicing to a governor's heart.

But Jeremiah laid a new plan for rehabilitating the land. Neither Jerusalem nor the Temple were to be rebuilt, for the present. All efforts were to be bent toward building up a new conscience in the simple farmers and vine dressers; to fit these for entering a new covenant with their God and to make them worthy, indeed, to be God's people.

In politics the land was to stand, above all, for faithfulness and loyalty to Babylonia. That was what Nebuchadrezzar expected from Gedaliah and that was what Gedaliah proposed to do. With the religion Nebuchadrezzar never did and never would

interfere. Therefore, first of all, the new governor issued this proclamation to the remnant that remained in Judah:

"Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans. Settle down and be subject to the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. As for me, I will dwell at Mizpah, as your representative to receive the Chaldeans who shall come to us; but you gather for yourselves wine and fruits and oil, and put them in your vessels and dwell in your cities of which you have taken possession."

The future again looked bright. Under Gedaliah there was promise of a peaceful restoration of Judah.

Jewish refugees in Moab, Ammon and Edom began to return, because they looked for a just and benevolent rule from Shaphan's grandson; and they would not have been disappointed had not scheming selfishness and hateful treachery stepped in to shatter the last possible Judean hope.

Chapter XXII.

Cowardice and Treachery.

Gedaliah had governed in Mizpah seven months when he was pleased to welcome back to his fatherland, Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, a Judean chieftain of the royal family, who had been driven to Ammon during the guerrilla warfare with Babylonia, under Jehoiakim.

A few days later, Johanan, son of Kareah, who was one of the governor's chief assistants, came to Gedaliah with the news that Ishmael was not sincere in his protestations of loyalty, that he was in the employ of Baalis, King of Ammon, and that his mission to Mizpah was to put Gedaliah out of the way. Baalis, Johanan reported, was contemplating rebellion some time in the future, and did not want in Judah a governor faithful to Babylonia. In addition, Johanan said, Ishmael was hoping, through the assistance of Baalis, to regain the throne of Judah for his family.

Gedaliah, nobleman that he was, refused to suspect Ishmael of treachery. On the contrary, a few days later he prepared a great banquet in Ishmael's honor and invited, in addition, all the Chaldean nobles whom Nebuchadrezzar had left behind in Judah to assist Gedaliah in restoring order and in establishing law and government.

Ishmael came with ten followers who had accompanied him from Ammon. At a given signal, Ishmael

and his ten men fell upon the unsuspecting Gedaliah and his Chaldean guests and turned the banquet hall into a house of death.

On the next day, word came to Mizpah that eighty men from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria, were coming to Mizpah, on their way to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices in the Temple ruins. These men had been selected by the survivors in that section of the country to express their thanks to God, in this manner, for having been spared by the Babylonians.

Ishmael went out to meet them. With tears in his eyes he told them that he was a messenger from Gedaliah to welcome them to Mizpah. Once in Mizpah, however, these eighty men were slaughtered by the ruthless and treacherous cowards from Ammon. Under Ishmael's direction, all the dead were thrown into the great reservoir that was built by King Asa of Judah at the time when he was at war with Baasha of Israel.

His work completed, Ishmael gathered his men to return to Baalis, in Ammon.

Johanan, who had warned Gedaliah of Ishmael's treachery, did not propose to let the murderer escape. He gathered up such faithful men as he could. By a quick march of two miles to the north, his little force confronted Ishmael just outside of Gibeon, on the well-traveled road leading to Beth Horon.

Before the little armies came to an engagement, Johanan sent word to Ishmael demanding surrender. Ishmael answered with a request for a parley on the next morning, which was granted.

During the night, however, Ishmael's men deserted him and went over to Johanan. Ishmael, himself, escaped to Ammon, and Johanan did not even pursue him. On the next morning all returned to Mizpah.

In Mizpah, Johanan was confronted with a new problem. What would happen when the news reached Babylon that all the Chaldean officers in Mizpah had been slain? The entire population knew what Nebuchadrezzar's vengeance meant. They feared to remain in Judah and, at a council of elders called by Johanan, it was determined to leave the fatherland altogether and emigrate to Egypt.

Before making a definite move, however, Johanan and the elders sought the advice of Jeremiah. They came to the prophet with this petition:

"Permit us to bring our petition before you that you may supplicate the Lord your God for us, even for all this remnant, for we are left but a few out of many—you yourself see us here—that the Lord your God may show us the way wherein we should walk, and the thing that we should do."

Jeremiah answered them:

"I have heard you; behold I will pray to the Lord your God according to your words, and whatever the Lord shall answer you, I will declare it to you; I will keep nothing back from you:"

To which the leaders replied:

"God be a true and faithful witness against us, if we do not according to all the word with which the Lord your God shall send you to us. Whether it be good or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send you, that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the Lord our God."

Jeremiah took ten days to consider the matter. Then the message came to him from the Lord his God and he delivered it to Johanan and his chieftains:

"If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you and not pull you down, and I will plant you and not pluck you up; for I am sorry for the evil that I have done to you. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, for I am with you to save you and to deliver you from his hand."

Johanan and the chieftains had hoped that Jeremiah would advise them to go to Egypt. They were disappointed. They took time, therefore, to discuss the matter further among themselves.

Jeremiah had had experience enough to know what the result would be. So he backed up his advice concerning Egypt with a public discourse, every line of which breathed hope for the future in Judah.

He tried to show that the old order of things had passed; that the old covenant between God and his people had been broken, never to be renewed again; that God would enter into a new covenant with them, a spiritual covenant, not so much with the whole nation, as with each individual. This is Jeremiah's memorable address at Mizpah:

"Behold the days are coming,
That I will sow Israel and Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast,
And as once I watched over them to pluck up and to afflict,
So will I be watchful over them to build and to plant.

"'Behold the days are coming,' saith the Lord,
'That I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,
Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers,
In the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt,

My covenant which they themselves broke and I was displeased with them;
But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel:

"'After those days,' saith the Lord,
'I will put my teaching in their breast and on their heart will I write it;
And I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people.
And they shall not teach any more every man his neighbor,
And every man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord,"
For they shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest;
For I will forgive them their iniquities and remember their sins no more.'"

On the day of the meeting to settle finally the question of emigration to Egypt, another shocking surprise awaited Jeremiah.

He was accused of being a false prophet; of not having the received the message against going into Egypt from God, at all. He was accused of having conspired with Baruch, who, Jeremiah was told, being of noble family, had ambitions to become King of Judah. Finally he was warned that Baruch intended to hand all the remnant over to Nebuchadrezzar. More than that! It was determined to emigrate to Egypt at once and that both Jeremiah and Baruch must accompany the self-exiled.

Chapter XXIII.

Jeremiah, the Martyred.

The forcing of Jeremiah into Egyptian exile with the others was the stroke that finally broke Jeremiah's heart. Against such stiff-necked perversity he could hold out no longer. He submitted, like a lamb, this time to be led, literally, to the slaughter.

Judah was destroyed, the Temple burnt, the royal family exterminated, the last of the friends of Jeremiah's family dead, the strength and nobility of the nation in Babylonian captivity, and now, the miserable remnant that was left in Judah, self-exiled to Egypt!

The destination of the emigrants was Tehaphenes, just across the boundary from Judah. There was already a small colony of Jews there. Being a frontier city on the main road to Jerusalem, Judeans often found refuge there from the many destructive armies that swept Judah.

These gave all the emigrants a hearty welcome. Jeremiah might have settled down there to pass the remaining years of his life quietly and at peace; or, he might have gone to Babylon where Nebuzaradan had promised to look after him. The course of events however, bade him remain where he now was.

Pharaoh Hophrah still had in mind the conquest of Babylon. But Jeremiah had preached all his life that Nebuchadrezzar was God's chosen servant for smiting and referring to its sufferings:

the nations, Egypt among them. He had, many times, dared death rather than dare be untrue to God and to his mission as a prophet. Therefore, in Tehaphenes, before Pharaoh's palace, Jeremiah delivered the following oration:

"Take great stones in thine hand and hide them in the clay of the pavement which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tehaphenes, in the sight of the men of Judah; and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon, My servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt."

Both the Jews and the Egyptians who heard him were thoroughly enraged. Their rage swelled into an outcry, and the outcry into an attack upon Jeremiah. The very stones of which he spoke were showered upon him by the infuriated mob.

Death, that he had often faced but escaped, now came to Jeremiah in this way—and Baruch, loving disciple and friend that he was, and Ebed-melech, faithful admirer and servant that he was, stood by Jeremiah's side to the last, sharing his fate with him.

Through no fault of his own, but as God's chosen servant, speaking naught but the word of God as it was revealed to him, Jeremiah had been despised, degraded, spat upon, made to suffer for the sins of his people and, finally, he was martyred at their hands.

It is held by some that the martyrdom of Jeremiah inspired a later prophet to write the following remarkable lines, although most Jewish scholars explain these lines as personifying the people of Israel

"Who would have believed what now we hear?
And to whom was the Lord's arm revealed?
Why, he grew up like a sapling before us,
Like a shoot out of dry ground!

"He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of pain and familiar with sorrow:
Yea, like one from whom men hide their faces,
He was despised, and we esteemed him not.

"Surely our sufferings he himself bore,
And our pains he carried;
Yet we esteemed him stricken,
Smitten of God and afflicted.

"But he was wounded for our transgressions,
Crushed because of our iniquities;
The chastisement for our well-being was upon him,
And through his stripes healing came to us.

"All of us, like sheep, had gone astray,
We had turned each his own way;
And the Lord laid upon him,
The guilt of us all.

"He was sore pressed, yet he resigned himself,
And open not his mouth,
As a lamb is led to the slaughter,
And as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb.

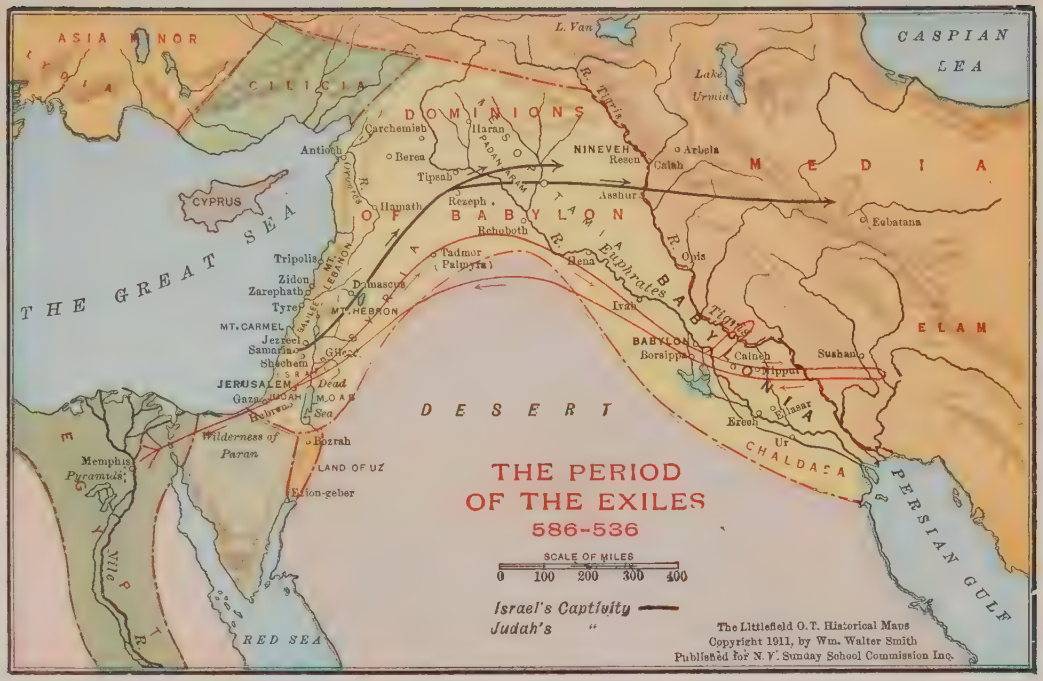
"Shut out from justice he was hurried away;
And as for his fate, who regarded it?—
That he was cut off out of the land of the living,
Stricken to death for our transgressions.

"They made his grave with the wicked,
And his tomb with the ungodly,
Although he had done no violence,
Neither was any deceit in his mouth.

But the Lord hath pleasure in His servant;
He will deliver his soul from anguish;
He will let him see and be satisfied,
And will vindicate him for his woes."

(Isaiah LIII.)

[END OF VOLUME ONE.]



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